

# Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl

(Al-'Isrā')

Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl is Makkī. It has 111 verses and 12 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

## Verse 1

سُبْحَنَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ، مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١﴾

Pure is He Who made his servant travel at night from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā the environs of which We have blessed, so that We let him see some of Our signs. Surely, He is the All Hearing, All Seeing. [1]

## Commentary

Described in this verse is the event of Mi'rāj (the Ascent to the heavens, or al-'Isrā', the midnight journey of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is a signal honor and distinctive miracle of our Messenger of Allah ﷺ). The word: *أَسْرَى* (*asrā*) is a derivation from: *إِسْرَى* (*isrā'*) which literally means to make someone travel at night. After that, the introduction of the word: *لَيْلًا* (*lailan*) also makes this sense very clear. Then, by placing this word as a common noun, the indication released was that during this event the time spent was that of a part of the night - not even that of the whole night. The journey from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā mentioned in this verse is called al-'Isrā' and the name of the journey from here to the seven heavens is al-Mi'rāj. Isrā' stands proved under

the definitive textual authority of this verse and the Mi'rāj finds mention in the verses of Sūrah an-Najm and is proved by Aḥādīth appearing in an uninterrupted succession. The word: عَبْدِهِ (*bi'abdiḥī*: His servant) used here for the Holy Prophet ﷺ is special. It shows that, in this magnificent setting of honor and welcome, when Allah Ta'ālā, on His own, elects to call someone 'His servant', a unique bond of love lies embedded therein and that this is the highest honor any man could ever have.

This is similar to what has been said in another verse: عِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا (and the servants of Ar-Raḥmān [the Most Merciful] are those who walk on the Earth gently - al-Furqān, 25:63) where the objective is to increase the prestige of those who are acceptable with Him. From here, we also learn that the highest achievement man is capable of is to become a perfect servant of Allah - for, on this eve of special honor, the quality of ideal servitude, out of his many attributes of perfection, was chosen. Then, the presence of this expression yields yet another beneficial outcome in that no one gets the wrong impression of divinity from this wonderful journey by night which, from its beginning to the end, is full of extra-habitual miracles. This is something like what happened with the Christians who fell into deception over the event of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام being raised unto the heavens. For this reason, by saying عَبْدٌ (*'abd*: servant), it was declared that, despite all those attributes, achievements and miracles, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was still a servant of Allah, not god.

### **The Qur'ān, Sunnah and 'Ijmā' prove that the Mi'rāj was physical.**

It is proved from the text of the Holy Qur'ān, and from Aḥādīth coming in uninterrupted succession mentioned later that the entire journey of the Isrā' and Mi'rāj was not simply spiritual, instead, it was physical - like the journey of anyone else. The very first word of the Holy Qur'ān in this Sūrah: سُبْحَانَ (Subḥān: Pure is He!) carries a hint in this direction because this word is used to register wonder or introduce a great marvel. Had the Mi'rāj been merely spiritual, just a matter of dream, what was there so unusual about it? As for a dream, every Muslim, even every human being, can see it and report that he or she went to the heavens, did this and did that.

The second indication embedded in the word: عَبْدٌ (*'abd*: servant) also

points out in the same direction because 'abd is no spirit all by itself, instead, it is the name of the combination of body and spirit.

In addition to that, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ related the event of Mi'rāj to Sayyidah Umm Hānī رضي الله عنها, she advised him not to mention it before anyone otherwise people would falsify it even more. Had this been the matter of a dream, what was there in it that needed to be falsified?

After that, when he did tell people about it, the disbelievers of Makkah called it a lie and made fun of him, so much so that some neo-Muslims became apostates (*murtadd*) after hearing the news. If this would have been the matter of a dream, the likelihood of such reactions was least warranted. And that he had experienced some spiritual Mi'rāj in the form of a dream, before this or after that, does not become contrary to it. According to the majority of Muslim scholars, the word: الرُّءْيَا (*ar-ru'yā*) in the verse of the Qur'an: وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ (And We showed you the scene - 17:60) means: رُءْيً (rūyah: seeing). But, it has been expressed through the word: رُؤْيَا (*ru'yā*, which is frequently used in the sense of seeing a dream). The reason for this expression could be that this thing has been called *ru'yā* in the sense of a simile. This is like someone seeing a dream. And if, *ru'yā* is taken to mean dream itself, then, it is also not too far out to say that the event of Mi'rāj, in addition to its being physical, also transpired, before or after it, in the form of a spiritual Mi'rāj as a dream as well. Therefore, the saying, that it was a dream, reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه and Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها is also correct in its place - but, it does not necessarily imply that physical Mi'rāj did not take place.

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that the Aḥādīth relating to the event of al-Isrā' are recurrent and uninterrupted. Naqqāsh has reported related narratives from twenty Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ has given additional details in Al-Shifā' (Qurṭubī).

Imām Ibn Kathīr has, in his Tafsīr, reported all these narratives and after applying the standard rules of scrutiny has mentioned the names of twenty-five Ṣaḥābah from whom these reports come. Their names are:

- (1) Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb,
- (2) Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā,

- (3) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd,
- (4) Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī,
- (5) Sayyidnā Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'ah,
- (6) Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah,
- (7) Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī,
- (8) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās,
- (9) Sayyidnā Shaddād ibn Aws,
- (10) Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b,
- (11) Sayyidnā 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn al-Qurāẓ,
- (12) Sayyidnā Abū Ḥayyah (ابوحيه),
- (13) Sayyidnā Abū Lailā,
- (14) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar,
- (15) Sayyidnā Jabīr ibn 'Abdullāh,
- (16) Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ibn Yamān,
- (17) Sayyidnā Buraidah,
- (18) Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī,
- (19) Sayyidnā Abū 'Umāmah,
- (20) Sayyidnā Samurah ibn Jundub,
- (21) Sayyidnā Abū al-Ḥamrā',
- (22) Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb al-Rūmī,
- (23) Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī',
- (24) Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah,
- (25) Sayyidah Asmā' bint Abī Bakr, ..... After that, Ibn Kathīr said:

فَحَدِيثُ الْإِسْرَاءِ أَجْمَعَ عَلَيْهِ الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ الزُّنَادِقَةُ وَالْمُلْحَدُونَ (ابن كثير)

As for the Ḥadīth of al-Isrā', there is a consensus of all Muslim on it. Only heretics and atheists have denied it. (Ibn Kathīr)

### A brief account of Mi'rāj - as reported by Ibn Kathīr

After having explained the present verse in his Tafsīr along with a detailed background of relevant Aḥādīth, Imām Ibn Kathīr has said: The truth of the matter is that the journey of Isrā' came to pass when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was awake, not dreaming. From Makkah al-Mukarramah to Baitulmaqdis, the journey was covered on *burāq* (a special heavenly horse to ride). When he reached the gate of Baitulmaqdis, he tied the *burāq* close to the gate, entered the Masjid of Baitulmaqdis and offered two *rak'āt* of Taḥiyyatul-masjid (prayer in honor of the Mosque) facing its orientation. After that, a staircase was

brought which had steps to go up from below. Through this staircase, he went to the first heaven. After that, he went to the rest of the heavens. [Only Allah knows the reality of this staircase - what it was and how did it work and things like that. In our day too, many kinds of stairs are in use. There are stairs that escalate automatically and there are elevators that take one up. Therefore, falling into any doubt or suspicion about this miraculous staircase is not right.] On every heaven, the resident angels greeted him and on every heaven, he met blessed prophets who were stationed on a particular heaven, such as, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام on the sixth heaven, and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام on the seventh heaven. After that, he went beyond the stations of all these blessed prophets and reached a plain where he could hear the sound of the pen writing destinies. And he saw the Sidratul-muntaha, the Far Tree in Jannah, on which moths in gold and variegated colors were falling from above by the command of Allah and which was surrounded by angels of Allah. And it was at this place that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn in his real form with six hundred wings. And right there, he saw a flag in green that had the horizon all covered up. And he also saw al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr (the well-attended House believed to be located in Jannah exactly above the Baytullah in Makkah) sitting by which was the founder of the Ka'bah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام with his back reclining against its wall. Seventy thousand angels enter this Bayt al-Ma'mūr every day who shall be waiting for their turn to re-enter there right through the day of Qiyāmah. And the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw the Jannah and the Jahannam with his own blessed eyes. At that time, first came the command that his people were being obligated with fifty prayers, then, these were reduced to five. This shows the importance and merit of Ṣalāh as being the foremost out of all acts of 'Ibādah.

After that, he alighted back into Baytul-maqdis and, with him, so did the blessed prophets he had met on different heavens (as if) they had come to see him off as far as Baytul-maqdis. At that time, as it was time for Ṣalāh, he offered the prayer with all prophets. It is also probable that this Ṣalāh was the Ṣalāh of Fajr the same day. Ibn Kathīr says that this event concerning the prayer with prophets led by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has come to pass, as held by some, before he went to the heavens. But, as obvious, this event took place after the return because it has been re-

ported in the incident relating to his meeting with blessed prophets at different heavens that it was Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl who introduced him to all prophets. Had this event relating to his leading the prayer passed earlier, no introduction was needed there - and, for that matter, it is obvious enough that the real purpose of this journey was to visit with the heavenly hosts. Doing that first appears to be more likely. Once he was done with the real mission, all prophets came to say good bye to him up to Baytul-maqdis and by making him the Imām of the prayer through a signal from Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl, his precedence over others was demonstrated practically.

After that, he departed from Baytul-maqdis riding *burāq* and reached Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah while it was still dark. والله سبحانه تعالى اعلم  
(And Allah, the Pure and the High, knows best).

### **The testimony of a non-Muslim about the event of Mi'rāj**

It appears in Tafsīr ibn Kathīr that Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, in his book, *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah*, has reported a narrative from Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓi on the authority of Muḥammad ibn 'Amr al-Wāqidi\* giving details of the event as follows:

The Holy Prophet ﷺ sent Sayyidnā Diḥyah ibn Khalīfah with a blessed letter from him to the Roman Emperor, Caesar. After that, he has given a detailed account of how Sayyidnā Diḥyah reached the Emperor, delivered the letter, and how intelligent he was in his mission (an event present in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī as well as in all trustworthy books of Ḥadīth). Towards the end of it, it has been reported that Hiraql, the Roman Emperor, once he had read the blessed letter, ordered that all Arab traders who were visiting the country at that time should be assembled together. He wanted to investigate into the background of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The royal order was carried out. Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb and those with him visiting Syria at that time with their famous trade caravan were presented before the Emperor. Details of the questions asked by the Emperor are present in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as well as elsewhere. Abū Sufyān was really

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\*. The Scholars of Ḥadīth say that Al-Wāqidi is weak in Ḥadīth narrations but a cautious Muḥaddith like Imām Ibn Kathīr has reported his narration for the reason that this matter is not connected with 'Aqā'id or Ḥalāl and Ḥarām and in such historical matters his narration is trustworthy - **Muḥammad Shafi'**

eager to use this occasion to say things about the Holy Prophet ﷺ which show his insignificance. But, says Abū Sufyān : Nothing stopped me from doing that except that I may slip and say something which turns out to be a lie and I stand disgraced in the eyes of the Emperor and my own comrades keep taunting me for being a liar. Certainly, then it occurred to me that I should relate the event of Mi'rāj before him. The Emperor would himself conclude from it that it was a lie. So, I said: I shall describe before you what he claims to have happened to him regarding which you will yourself realize that it was a lie. Hiraql asked: What event is that? Abū Sufyān said: This claimant of prophet-hood says that, one night, he left Makkah al-Mukarramah, reached this Masjid Baytul-maqdis of yours and, then, within that night, before dawn, he returned to us in Makkah al-Mukarramah!

At that time, the leading scholar of Elia' (Baytul-maqdis) was standing close to Hiraql, the Roman Emperor. He disclosed that he knew that night. The Emperor turned to him and inquired as to how did he come to know about it. He submitted that, as a matter of habit, he would not sleep at night until he had closed all gates of Baytul-maqdis. That night he habitually closed all gates but one which would not close despite his effort. He summoned his staff. They all tried but they too failed to close it. The panels of the gate remained simply unmoved from their place. It seemed as if they were trying to move some mountain. Rendered helpless, he called technicians and carpenters. They looked at the gate and decided that the weight of the building has come to rest on the panels of the gate. There was no way it could be closed before morning. When morning comes, they said, they will see how this could be fixed. Non-plussed, he returned leaving both panels of the gate ajar. As soon as it was morning, he came back to the gate where he noticed that someone had made a hole in the rock close to the gate of the Masjid which gave the impression that some animal was tied down there. At that time he had told his colleagues: Perhaps, Allah Ta'ālā has caused this gate not to close today because some prophet was to come here. And then, he also stated that this blessed prophet has also offered his prayer in this Masjid of ours. Thereafter, he has described further details. (Ibn Kathīr, p. 24, v. 3)

### **The date of the event of al-'Isrā' and Mi'rāj**

Imām al-Qurṭubī has said in his Tafsīr that the narratives of Ḥadīth

regarding the date of Mi'rāj are quite different. According to Musa ibn 'Uqbah, this event came to pass six month before the Hijrah to Madīnah. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها had passed away before the injunction making Ṣalāh a Farḍ (obligation) was revealed. Imām Zuhri says that the event of the sad demise of Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها took place seven years after the call to the mission of prophet-hood.

According to some Ḥadīth narratives, the event of Mi'rāj happened five years after the call to prophet-hood. Ibn Ishāq says that the event of Mi'rāj took place at a time when Islam had spread throughout the tribes of Arabia generally. The outcome of all these narratives is that the event of Mi'rāj dates back to several years before the Hijrah to Madīnah.

Al-Ḥarbi says that the event of al-'Isrā' and Mi'rāj has happened during the night of the 27th of Rabi' ath-Thānī, one year before Hijrah and Ibn al-Qāsim adh-Dhahabi says that it took place eighteen months after the call to prophet-hood. Esteemed Muḥaddithīn (Ḥadīth scholars) who have mentioned these different narratives have not followed it up with any decisive statement. And as commonly known, the 27th night of the month of Rajab is the Night of Mi'rāj. واللّٰهُ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ أَعْلَمُ (And Allah, the Pure and the High, knows best).

### **Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā**

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه says that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'Which Masjid of this world comes first?' He said, 'Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām.' Then he inquired, 'Which one after that?' He said, 'Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.' Then he tried to find out the intervening time difference between the two whereupon he said, 'Forty years.' After that, he added, '(as for the order of these *masājid*, this is it) but, Allah Ta'ālā has made the entire Earth a *masjid* for us. Wherever comes the time of Ṣalāh, offer it right there.' (Reported by Muslim)

Early Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid says that Allah Ta'ālā has made the site of Baytullah two thousand years before He made the entire Earth and that its foundations reach as far down as the seventh (strata of) Earth and that al-Masjid al-Aqṣā was made by Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. (Reported by an-Nasā'ī with sound chains of authority from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar) (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, p. 137, v. 4)



And al-Masjid al-Ḥarām is the name of the Mosque that stands around the Baytullah ash-Sharīf while, on occasions, the entire Ḥarām is also identified as al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. In terms of this second sense, the dichotomy of those two reports - some hold that the Holy Prophet ﷺ left for the nocturnal journey, al-'Isrā', from the home of Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī' رضى الله عنها while others say that he departed from the section of Baytullah known as Ḥaṭīm - stands removed. If we were to take al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in its general sense, it is not far out to believe that he may have been there in the home of Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī' رضى الله عنها first, then he walked over to the Ḥaṭīm of Ka'bah and then began the journey of al-'Isrā' from there. Allah knows best.

### Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā and blessings of the Syrian environs

The word: حَوْلَ (ḥawl: environs) in the verse: بُرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ (the environs of which We have blessed) means the entire land of Syria. It appears in a Ḥadīth that Allah Ta'ālā has made the land from the 'Arsh (Divine Throne) to the river, Euphrates and, out of this, He has bestowed particular holiness on the land of Palestine. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The blessings it has are both religious and worldly. As for religious blessings, it has been the Qiblah of all past prophets, and their home, and the last resting place. And that its land is green, lush and verdant with streams, rivers and fruit farms etc. shows its worldly blessings.

Sayyidnā Mu'adh ibn Jabal ؓ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Allah Ta'ālā says: O land of Syria, thou art My region chosen from many and I shall make My chosen servants reach thee. (Qurṭubī) And it appears in a Ḥadīth of the Musnad of Aḥmad that the Imposter will traverse the whole Earth but he will not be granted access to four Mosques: (1) Masjid of Madīnah, (2) Masjid of Makkah al-Mukarramah, (3) Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā and (4) Masjid Ṭūr.

### Verses 2 - 3

وَاتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ أَلَّا تَتَّخِذُوا  
مِنْ دُونِي وَكِيلًا ﴿٢﴾ ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا  
شَكُورًا ﴿٣﴾

And We gave Mūsā the Book and made it guidance for the children of Isrā'īl (with the command) "Do not take anyone other than Me as guardian, [2] O descendants of those whom We put on board with Nūḥ. Surely, He was a very grateful servant." [3]

Verses 4 - 8

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَآءِیْلَ فِی الْكِتَابِ لُتْفُسِدَنَّ فِی الْأَرْضِ مَرَّتَیْنِ  
وَلَتُعْلَنَ عَلَٰوًا كَبِیْرًا ﴿٤﴾ فَاِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ اٰوْلٰهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَیْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَا  
اَوَّلٰی بَاسٍ شَدِیْدٍ فَجَاسُوْا خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُوْلًا ﴿٥﴾ ثُمَّ  
رَدَدْنَا لَكُمْ الْكُرَّةَ عَلَیْهِمْ وَاَمَدَدْنٰكُمْ بِاَمْوَالٍ وَّبَنَیْنٍ وَجَعَلْنٰكُمْ اَكْثَرَ  
نَفِیْرًا ﴿٦﴾ اِنْ اَحْسَنْتُمْ اَحْسَنْتُمْ لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ وَاِنْ اَسَآءْتُمْ فَلَهَا ؕ فَاِذَا  
جَآءَ وَعْدُ الْاٰخِرَةِ لَیْسُوْءٌ اَوْجُوْهُكُمْ وَلَیَدْخُلُوْا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا  
دَخَلُوْهُ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلَیُتَبَرَّوْا مَا عَلَوْا تَتَبِیْرًا ﴿٧﴾ عَسٰی رُبُّكُمْ اَنْ  
یَّرْحَمَكُمْ وَاِنْ عُدْتُمْ عُدْنَا وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِیْنَ حَصِیْرًا ﴿٨﴾

And, in the Book, We declared to the children of Isrā'īl: "You will surely spread disorder on the earth twice, and you will surely show arrogance, a great arrogance. [4]

So, when came the time appointed for the first of the two, We sent upon you some servants belonging to us having strong aggressive power, who combed through the houses. And it was a promise bound to be fulfilled. [5] Then We gave you your turn to overpower them, and increased your strength with wealth and sons, and made you greater in number. [6] If you do good, you will do it for yourselves, and if you do evil, it will be for you, too. Later, when came the time appointed for the second, (We sent others) so that they spoil your faces, and so that they enter into the Mosque as the former ones had entered it the first time and destroy what they overpower, totally. [7]

May be your Lord would bestow mercy upon you. And if you do this again, We shall do that again. And We have made Jahannam a prison for the disbelievers. [8]

### Sequence of Verses

Verses 2 and 3 featuring the statement: جَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَآءِيلَ (We made it guidance for the children of Banī Isrā'īl) exhorted the Banī Isrā'īl to follow and obey the Divine Law. The verses that follow warn and admonish them on their disobedience. These verses mention two events relating to the Banī Isrā'īl so that they serve as a lesson. Tuned to sin and disobedience, first they increased the tempo of their hostility. Allah Ta'ālā set their enemies upon them. They shook them up. The Jews got the message, cut down on their mischief and gave the impression of having been corrected. But, soon after, the same lust for mischief and misdeeds overtook them. So then, Allah Ta'ālā had them punished at the hands of their enemies. The Qur'an mentions two events while history carries six like these:

1. The first event came to pass some time after the demise of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام, the founder of Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā, when the ruler of Baytul-maqdis became irreligious and corrupt. The ruler of Egypt attacked him and took away the gold and silver of Baytul-maqdis. But, he did not demolish the city and the Masjid.

2. The second event relates to the period nearly four hundred years after that. Some Jews settled in Baytul-maqdis started idol-worship while the rest began disputing among themselves. This ill omen prompted another ruler of Egypt to attack them which somewhat affected the city and the Masjid both. After that, their condition took a turn for the better.

3. The third event came to pass after some years when Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon ransacked Baytul-maqdis. He conquered the city, looted property and took back a lot of people as prisoners of war. When he left, he had a member of the family of the former king appointed a ruler of the city as his deputy.

4. When this new king, who worshipped idols and was corrupt, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, he returned, killed people, destroyed property en masse and burned the city razing it to rubbles. This happened nearly four hundred and fifteen years after the construction of the Masjid. After that, the Jews went out as exiles to Babylon where they lived in disgrace for seventy years. After that, the King of Iran attacked

the King of Babylon and conquered it. Then the King of Iran showed mercy to the Jewish expatriates and ordered that they should be sent back to Syria along with things looted from them. Now the Jews had repented having forsaken their habitual sins and misdeeds. When they resettled there, they restored the original structure of Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā with the support of the King of Irān.

5. Then came the fifth event. When the Jews had peace and prosperity once again, the first thing they forgot was their past. They returned to the kind of evil deeds they were used to. Then, it so happened that, one hundred and seventy years before the birth of Sayyidnā 'Isā ﷺ, the king who had founded Antakiah (Antioch) attacked, killed forty thousand Jews and took with him another forty thousand as prisoners and slaves, even desecrated the Masjid though its structure remained safe. But, later, the successors of that king rendered the city and the Masjid totally denuded. Soon after this, Baytul-maqdis came under the authority of Roman kings. They put the Masjid back into shape and it was after eight years that Sayyidnā 'Isā ﷺ was born.

6. Forty years after the physical ascension of Sayyidnā 'Isā ﷺ, the Jews chose to rebel against their Roman rulers. The Romans destroyed the city and the Masjid once again relegating it to what it was. The king at that time was called Titus who was neither Jewish nor Christian because long after him Constantine I was a Christian. From that time to the time of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ, this Masjid lay desolate until he had it reconstructed. These six events have been reported in Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān with reference to Tafsīr Haqqānī.

Now, it is difficult to precisely determine as to which two out of those mentioned above are the two events mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān. But, as obvious, the events that are major and serious among these, in which the Jews were far too wicked and more seriously punished too, should be taken as the likely ones. The fourth and the sixth event seem to be fit for such application. At this point, a lengthy Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ؓ, with its chains of authority ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, has been reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī. It also helps in determining that these two events mean the fourth and the sixth event. The translation of this lengthy Ḥadīth is given below:

Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ؓ says that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ if Baytul-maqdis was a great Masjid in the sight of Allah. He said that it was the most distinct house of Worship in the world, the greatest of all houses, which Allah Ta'ālā made for Sulaymān, the son of Dāwūd, peace be on both, with gold, silver and precious stones like ruby and emerald. The manner in which this happened was, when Sulaymān ؑ started its construction, Allah Ta'ālā made the Jinn subservient to him. The Jinn collected this gold, silver and precious stones and used them in the making of the Masjid. Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ؓ says that he, then, asked as to where and how did all that gold, silver and precious stones go out of Baytul-maqdis? The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When the Banī Isrā'īl disobeyed Allah Ta'ālā, got involved in sins and misdeeds and killed their noble prophets, Allah Ta'ālā set King Nebuchadnezzar on them. He was a fire-worshipper who ruled Baytul-maqdis for seven hundred years. And when the Qur'an says: فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَنَا أُولَىٰ بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ (So, when came the time appointed for the first of the two, We sent upon you some servants belonging to Us having strong aggressive power - 17:5), it means this event. The army of Nebuchadnezzar entered the Masjid of al-Quds, killed men, took women and children prisoners and carried away with him all gold, silver and everything of value belonging to Baytul-maqdis loaded on one hundred and seventy thousand vehicles. He kept the treasure in his country, Babylon and kept the children of Isrā'īl as his serfs and slaves for a hundred years making them do hard labor in utter disgrace.

Then Allah Ta'ālā made a king from among the kings of Persia to stand up against him. He conquered Babylon, freed the remnants of Banī Isrā'īl from the bondage of Nebuchadnezzar and made arrangements to have all valuables he had brought from Baytul-maqdis returned back to it. Then he sternly told the Banī Isrā'īl that should they, in future, return to disobedience and sin, he too will return the punishment of killing and prison back on them. This is what the verse of the Qur'an: عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يَرْحَمَكُمْ وَإِنْ عُدتُمْ عُدتْنَا (May be your Lord would bestow mercy upon you. And if you do this again, We shall do that again - 17:8) means.

Later, when the Banī Isrā'īl had come back to Baytul-maqdis (with lost wealth and property in their possession), they went back to the life

of sins and misdeeds. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā set the Roman Emperor, Caesar upon them. This is what the verse: *فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسُوءَ وُجُوهَكُمْ* (Later, when came the time appointed for the second, [We sent others] so that they spoil your faces - 17:7) means. The Roman Emperor launched a two-pronged attack, from the land and the sea. He killed many and many were those he took prisoners. Then he had all this wealth of Baytul-maqdis loaded on one hundred and seventy thousand vehicles and took it home. There he had it deposited in the Temple of Gold. This wealth is still there, and there it will remain until comes the Mahdī who would bring these back to Baytul-maqdis on one hundred and seventy thousand boats and it will be at this place that Allah Ta'ālā will assemble everyone, former and later. (Lengthy Ḥadīth as reported by al-Qurṭubī in his Tafsīr)

It appears in Bayān al-Qur'ān, that the two events mentioned in the Qur'ān refer to the disobedience of two Divine Codes of Law, first the disobedience to the Code brought by Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) and, then, after the advent of Sayyidnā 'Isā (عليه السلام), the disobedience to the Code brought by him. Thus, all events described above can be considered as relevant to the first disobedience. Now that we have gone through the details of the events, we can turn to the explanation of the verses cited above.

### Commentary

The outcome of the events mentioned above is that Allah Ta'ālā had decreed that the Banī Isrā'īl will be successful, having the best of both worlds, the material and the spiritual, as long as they continue to obey Allah. But, whenever they deviate from the dictates of Faith, they shall be put to disgrace, and that they would be subjected to punishment at the hands of enemies and disbelievers. Then, not only that the enemies will run over them destroying their lives and properties, but it would also happen that their Qiblah, their sacred Baytul-maqdis, will also not remain safe against the onslaught of that enemy. Their disbelieving enemies will barge into the Mosque of Baytul-maqdis and defile and damage it. This too will be a part of the punishment of Banī Isrā'īl themselves. The Holy Qur'ān has told us about two events relating to them. The first one dates back to the time of Mosaic religious law while the second pertains to the Christian. During both these periods, the Banī Isrā'īl rebelled against the divine law of the time. In the first case, a disbelieving Magian monarch was made to sit over them, and

Baytul-maqdis, who brought great destruction upon them. In the second case, a Roman emperor was set against them who killed and pillaged and made Baytul-maqdis all demolished and rendered desolate. And along with this description, it has also been mentioned that the Banī Isrā'īl - when, on both occasions, they repented from their misdeeds resolving not to go near them again - Allah Ta'ālā reinstated their country, wealth and children.

After having mentioned these two events, Allah Ta'ālā declared His Law in such matters by saying: **وَأَنْ عُدْتُمْ عَدَاً** (If you do this again, We shall do that again - 8). This law which means - 'if you return to disobedience and contumacy, We shall, once again, make a similar penalty and punishment zoom back upon you' - has been declared as valid right through the last day of Qiyamah. That its addressees were the people of Banī Isrā'īl who were present during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ serves as a reminder to them. It is being pointed out to them that they should not forget that they were seized by divine punishment twice when they had first opposed the code of Sayyidnā Mūsā, and then the code of Sayyidnā 'Isā. Now this was the period of the Code of laws brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was a period that will continue up to the Last Day. Let them, therefore, realize that the fate of those who chose to be hostile to it will turn out to be no different. Consequently, this was actually happened. These people became hostile to Islam and the religious code of laws brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When they did that, they were expelled and disgraced at the hands of Muslims, and finally Baytul-maqdis, their Qiblah, too came under Muslim control. However, the only difference was that their past conquering kings had treated them disgracefully and had desecrated their Qiblah too. Now when Muslims took over Baytul-maqdis, they reconstructed the great Mosque of al-Quds ash-Sharīf which was lying demolished and desolate for centuries and thereby reinstated the honor and reverence of the Qiblah of prophets.

**The events of Banī Isrā'īl are a lesson for Muslims and what has happened to Baytul-maqdis in our time is a part of the same chain**

Obviously, the purpose of narrating these events relating to the Banī Isrā'īl in the Qur'an and making Muslims listen to them is to let Mus-

lims understand that they are no exceptions to this divine law. Be it this mortal world or the eternal universe of their Faith, their honor and ascendancy, possessions and wealth are inseparably tied with obedience to Allah. Whenever they veer away from their obedience to Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their enemies and disbelieving tyrants of all sorts shall be empowered to prevail over them. When this happens, the desecration of their places of worship will also not remain too far.

The calamity of the Jewish usurpation of Baytul-maqdis in our time and the added sacrilege of setting fire to it has thrown the world of Islam into acute anxiety. In reality, it is confirming the Qur'ān. Muslims forgot Allah and His Rasūl, ignored the life waiting for them in the Hereafter and opted to scrounge for their share in the glamour and grandeur of the mortal world. When they became aliens to the dictates of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, the same divine law stood activated before them. A few hundred thousand Jews overcame them. They also inflicted the loss of life and property on them. Worse still is the fate of one of the three greatest mosques of the world according to the religious law of Islam, a mosque that has the distinction of being the Qiblah of all prophets. It was snatched from them and those who took it over had a track record of being the most disgraced people in this world, that is, the Jews. In addition to that, it is common observation that these people stand nowhere close to Muslims in terms of their numbers, nor do they have some significant superiority over the current collective Muslim holdings of war materials. This also tells us that this event does not really give Jews any niche of honor in the annals of world nations. However, it does provide punishment for Muslims in return for their disobedience. It clearly shows that everything that came to pass came as the punishment of our own misdeeds. And it also shows that there is no remedy for it except that we should feel ashamed of our misdeeds, make a genuine *taubah* (repentance), start obeying the commandments of Allah, become true Muslims and shun the great sins of imitating and trusting others. If we were to do just that, *insha'Allah*, true to the Divine promise, Baytul-maqdis and Palestine shall return to us. But, it is regrettable that the present-day Arab rulers and common Muslims living in Arab lands have yet to be alerted to that reality. They are still relying on foreign assistance while making plans of taking Baytul-maqdis back, something that does



not appear to be probable, at least outwardly. Where else shall we lodge our complaint but Allah!

The only weapon system and military hardware with which Baytul-maqdis and Palestine can return to Muslim hands are still there waiting to be picked up - Return to Allah, genuinely and passionately. Have certitude of Akhirah. Obey the injunctions of the Shari'ah. Stay away from imitating and trusting others in our social and political goals. Finally, let us place our trust in Allah and wage a purely Islamic Jihād as enjoined by the Shari'ah. May Allah Ta'ālā give our Arab rulers and other Muslims the ability to answer the challenge effectively.

### **A strange coincidence**

Allah Ta'ālā has made two places on this Earth to serve as the Qiblah or orientation for those who worship Him, the Baytul-maqdis and the Baytullah. But, the divine law relating to each of them is different. That Baytullah shall be protected and that disbelievers shall never take it over is a security concern that Allah Ta'ālā has taken it upon Himself. The Event of the Elephant mentioned in Sūrah al-Fīl (105) of the Holy Qur'ān came as its result. When the Christian king of Yaman (Abraham al-Ashram) invaded Baytullah, Allah Ta'ālā destroyed him and his army along with the contingent of elephants he had brought, through birds, much before he could reach Baytullah.

But, this law does not apply in the case of Baytul-maqdis. Instead, as the verses cited above tell us, when Muslims go astray and start indulging in disobedience and sin, this Qiblah will be snatched away from them and it will pass into the control of disbelievers.

### **Disbelievers too are the servants of Allah, but not among the accepted ones**

About the first event (5), the Holy Qur'ān said: When the people of Faith start letting them be seduced to discord, sin, disobedience and disorder, Allah Ta'ālā shall set upon them such servants of His as would break into their homes killing and plundering. At this place, the Qur'ān has used the expression: عِبَادًا لَّآ (ibādal-lanā: Some servants belonging to Us) and not: عِبَادَنَا (ibādanā: Our servants) - even though it was brief. There is wisdom behind it. Is it not that the attribution of a servant to Allah is, for him, the greatest conceivable honor? This is similar to what

we have explained at the beginning of this very Sūrah under our comments on the first verse: *أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ* (*asrā' bi'abdihi*: made His servant travel at night). There it was said that certainly great was the honor and nearness the Holy Prophet ﷺ was blessed with during the night of the Mi'rāj. But, when the Qur'ān describes this event, it does not mention either his blessed name or some attribute. It simply said: *عَبْدِهِ* ('*abdihi*: His servant). This tells us that the ultimate perfection a human person can have, and the highest station he can occupy, is that Allah Ta'ālā chooses to cherish a servant by calling him 'His' servant. In the verse under reference, the people who meted out the punishment to the Banī Isrā'īl were *kāfirs*, or disbelievers after all. Therefore, instead of calling them: *عِبَادَنَا* (Our servants), Allah Ta'ālā has broken the element of attribution and connection and said: *عِبَادَنَا* (some servants belonging to Us). Thus, a hint has been given here that all human beings are nothing but servants of Allah as created, but because of the absence of 'Imān or faith, they are not the kind of accepted servants who could be attributed directly to Allah Ta'ālā.

### Verses 9 - 11

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيَشِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ  
الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٩﴾ وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ  
أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٠﴾ وَيَدْعُ الْإِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَاءَهُ بِالْخَيْرِ  
وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ عَجُولًا ﴿١١﴾

Surely, this Qur'ān guides to the way which is most upright and gives the believers who do good deeds the glad tidings that there is a great reward for them, [9] and that for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have prepared a painful punishment. [10]

Man invites evil as he would invite good, and man is prone to haste. [11]

### Sequence

At the beginning of the Sūrah, the majesty of the prophet-hood of the Messenger of Allah was described through the miracle of al-Mi'rāj. The present verses cite the miracle of Qur'ān as its confirmation.

## Commentary

### The most upright way

The way to which the Qur'ān guides has been called '*aqwam*,' the most upright. '*Aqwam*' can be explained by saying that it is a way that is closer to the destination, is easy and free of dangers at the same time. (Qurṭubī) This tells us that the rules set for human life by the Holy Qur'ān are a combination of all three features mentioned above. However, it is a different matter that man may start taking this way to be difficult or dangerous on occasions because of his own lack of comprehension. But, the Lord of all the worlds has the most comprehensive knowledge of every single particle in the entire universe. Before Him, the past and the future are the same. It is He who can have the knowledge of the reality as to the function and form most beneficial for human beings. And since man is unaware of things as they are in a comprehensive setting, he cannot identify even his own good or bad fully and decisively.

Perhaps, it is based on this congruity that it was said in verse 11 that man would, on occasions, pray for something in a haste, something that spells out destruction for him. If Allah Ta'ālā were to answer such a prayer, he would be ruined. But, Allah Ta'ālā does not answer such prayers instantly until man himself comes to realize that his prayer was made in error and that it was fatal for him. Then, in the last sentence of this very verse, a natural weakness of man has been mentioned in the form of a standing rule - that man is, by nature, haste-prone. He keeps his sight trained on passing profit and loss and falls short on foresight and hindsight. He loves to go for the immediate gain and comfort, even if it happens to be only a little. He would not bat an eye to prefer it to the greater and more lasting gain and comfort. In short, this verse points out to a natural weakness of human beings in general.

And some authorities in Tafsīr have taken this verse to be related to a particular event. The event they refer to concerns Naḍr ibn Ḥārith who had made a prayer in the heat of his hostility to Islam saying:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنْ كَانَ هٰذَا هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَامْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ اَوْ اِتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ  
اَلِيْمٍ

O Allah, if this [Islam] is the truth from You, then, rain down on us rocks from the skies or send upon us some other painful

punishment.

In that case, '*al-insān*' of the text would be referring to those mentioned above, or those like them.

### Verses 12 - 15

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً  
لِتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ ۖ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ  
فَصْلَانَهُ تَفْصِيلًا ﴿١٢﴾ وَكُلُّ إِنْسَانٍ أَلَمْنَهُ طَرَفُهُ فَبِئْسَ عُقُوبَةُ  
وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنشُورًا ﴿١٣﴾ اقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ ۖ كَفَى  
بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبًا ﴿١٤﴾ مَن اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ۚ  
وَمَن ضَلَّٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۖ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۚ وَمَا كُنَّا  
مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا ﴿١٥﴾

And We have made the night and the day two signs having made the sign of night dark and the sign of day bright, so that you may seek grace from your Lord, and that you may know the number of the years and computation. And everything We have expounded in detail. [12]

And every human's (deeds determining his) fate We have tied up to his neck, and We shall bring forth for him, on the day of Resurrection, a book he will receive wide open. [13] "Read your book. This day you yourself are enough to take your own account." [14]

Whoever takes to right path does so for his own good, and whoever goes astray does so to his own detriment. And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another. And it is not Our way to punish (anyone) unless We send a Messenger. [15]

### Commentary

In the verses cited above, first it was declared that the alternation of night and day was a sign of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. Then it was said that there was great wisdom in the making of the night dark and the day, bright. As for the wise consideration behind the making of

the night dark, it was not mentioned at this place. It has, however, been mentioned in other verses that the darkness of the night is appropriate and conducive to sleep and rest. The divine arrangement is such that humans and animals go to sleep in the darkness of that very night. In fact, the whole world sleeps simultaneously in harmony with its night. Had different people been scheduled to sleep at different timings, the noises made by those awake and those working at jobs would have turned the sleep of the sleeping into a nightmare.

As for the day being bright, it has two elements of wisdom. Firstly, one can earn his living in the light of the day and natural light is needed for jobs, businesses and industries. Secondly, the alternation of night and day helps one know the number of years, for instance, the completion of three hundred and sixty days tells us that a full year has gone by.

Similarly, other calculations are also related to the alternation of night and day. If this variation of night and day were not there, it would have been difficult to fix the wages of the wage earner, the employment of the employee and the time duration of transactions.

### **The sense of the book of deeds tied to the neck**

It means that one's book of deed stays with the doer no matter where or in whatever condition one is. What he or she does continues to get recorded there. When death comes, the 'book' is closed and set aside safely. After that, when comes the Last Day, the Day of Judgement, this book of deeds will be placed in everyone's hand in order that he would himself read it and also decide himself whether he is deserving of reward or deserving of punishment. It has been reported from Qatādah رحمه الله تعالى that it will be a day when even an illiterate person will be able to read his book of deeds. On this occasion, al-Iṣbahānī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Umamah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the day of Qiyāmah, when the book of deeds belonging to people will be given in their hand, someone will notice that some of his good deeds were not recorded there. He will tell his Lord about the particular deeds missing from there. His Lord will tell him that He had erased those deeds for he used to speak ill of people on their backs. (Maḥḥarī)

### **Allah does not punish unless He sends a Messenger:**

#### **A clarification**

On the basis of this verse, some leading Muslim jurists rule that peo-

ple to whom the call of any prophet or messenger did not reach will not be subject to any punishment, despite their disbelief. There are other leading jurists who hold that those who deny the Islamic beliefs that can be understood through reason - such as, the existence of God and His Oneness etc. - will be punished for their disbelief, even if no call from any prophet or messenger has reached them. Of course, there will be no punishment for usual acts of disobedience and sins without prior call and transmission of the divine message by prophets. And there are still others who interpret '*rasūl*' at this place (15) in a general sense, whether he is a messenger or prophet, or whether it is the human reason itself - for, that too, in a way, is a messenger of Allah after all.

### There will be no punishment for the children of Mushriks

Commenting on the verse: لَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ (And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another - 15), it has been said in Tafsīr Maḥzarī that this verse proves that the children of Mushriks and disbelievers who die before reaching adulthood will not be punished. The reason is that they will not deserve to be punished on account of the denial and disbelief of their parents. Sayings of leading jurists differ about this issue; its details are unnecessary here.

### Verses 16 - 17

وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نُهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَرْنَاهَا تَدْمِيرًا ﴿١٦﴾ وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ بَعْدِ نُوحٍ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ بِذُنُوبٍ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

And when We intend to destroy a habitation, We command its affluent people (to do good), then they commit sins therein, and thus the word (of punishment) becomes due against it (habitation) and We annihilate it totally. [16]

And how many a generation We have destroyed after Nūḥ! And enough is your Lord to know, (and) watch the sins of His servants. [17]

### Sequence

Previous verses said that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that he does not send punishment upon a people until the command-

ments of Allah reach them through the blessed prophets which they still refuse to obey. Given in the verses cited above is what happens on the other side when the messages of Allah and His Messenger do reach a people and they still show contumacy, then, a mass punishment is sent over them.


## Commentary

### A doubt and its answer

A surface look at the expressions: *إِذَا أَرَدْنَا* (*idhā aradnā*: when We intend) and, after that: *أَمَرْنَا* (*amarnā*: We command) in verse 12 could have triggered the doubt that destroying those people was the divine purpose from the very beginning. Therefore, they were first commanded to believe and obey through the prophets, then their indulgence in sin was made to be the cause of punishment. All this came from none but Allah Ta'ālā. Is it not? If so, would these innocent people not be just about a helpless and excusable lot? The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā has given man reason and choice and has determined the ways of reward and punishment. Now, if someone elects to do nothing but what brings punishment, then, it is the customary practice of Allah that He would activate the causes that bring the same punishment. Thus, the real cause of punishment they receive is nothing but their own resolve and determination to remain on the side of disbelief and sin. Since this is no simple intention, therefore, they cannot be helpless and excusable.

### Another Tafsīr of this verse

The well known sense of the word: *أَمَرْنَا* (*amarnā*) is the same as appears above, that is, 'We commanded.' But, the renditions or versions (*qirā'āt*) of this word differ. In one rendition opted for by Abū 'Uthmān an-Nahdi, Abū Raja', Abū al-'Āliyah and Mujāhid, this word has appeared with a double sound on the letter *mīm*. Rendered as: *أَمَمَرْنَا* (*ammarnā*), it means 'We made affluent people leaders and rulers, who then sank in sin, and thus became the cause of punishment for the whole people.'

There is a *qirā'ah* (rendition or version) of this word credited to Sayyidnā 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās  where it has been recited as: *أَمَمَرْنَا* (*aamarnā*) and which has also been explained by them as having the sense of: *أَكْثَرْنَا* (*aktharnā*: We increase the number of). Thus it comes to mean: 'When

Allah Ta'ālā sends punishment on a certain people, its initial sign is that the number of the reckless rich is increased among them and they, through their spate of sins, become the cause of making the punishment descend upon the entire people.'

The outcome of the first *qirā'ah* is that such affluent people are made the rulers of a people. The outcome of the second *qirā'ah* is that the number of such people is increased in that society. Both versions show that the government of the 'affluent' or the abundance of such people in a society is not something to be happy about, rather, is a sign of divine punishment.

Let us recapitulate. When Allah Ta'ālā is angry with a people and intends to make a punishment descend upon them, there appears an initial sign of it. People who love to wallow in wealth and power are made the ruling custodians of their affairs, or, even if they do not become their actual political rulers, the number of such people is increased among a people. In both these cases, the result is the same. Drunk with the pleasures they can buy, acquire or appropriate with their affluence and influence, they start caring less for anything else, disobey the will and command of Allah personally as well as lead the trail for others to follow in their footsteps. In consequence, comes the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā all over them.

### **The influence of the rich over a people is a natural phenomenon**

By particularly mentioning affluent people who use their wealth to pursue a life of luxury, it has been indicated that the masses are naturally affected with the deeds and morals of those rich among them and those who rule over them. When these people get used to misdeeds, the whole nation follows suit and takes to misdeeds (as the only available norm of social survival). Therefore, those who have been blessed with wealth by Allah Ta'ālā should be more concerned with the correction of their deeds and morals - lest they fall into the trap of a luxurious life style, are heedless to self-correction, and make the entire nation go astray because of them. If so, the curse of the misdeeds that issue forth from their nation will fall on them too.



## Verses 18 - 21

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَاهَا مَذْمُومًا مَدْحُورًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا ﴿١٩﴾ كُلًّا نُمِدُّ هَؤُلَاءِ وَهَؤُلَاءِ مِنْ عَطَاءِ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُورًا ﴿٢٠﴾ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ ۖ وَلَآخِرَةُ أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَتٍ وَأَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيلًا ﴿٢١﴾

Whoever opts for the immediate (benefits from) life herein, We give him right here, in this life, as much as We will to whomever We intend. Then We assign Jahannam for him where he shall enter condemned, discarded. [18] And whoever opts for the Hereafter and makes efforts for it as due, while he is a believer, then, the effort of such people is appreciated! [19]

To all of them - both these and those - We extend the blessings of your Lord. And the blessing of your Lord is not barred (to anyone). [20]

See how We made some of them excel some others (in this world) and, of course, the Hereafter is far higher in ranks and far greater in degrees of merit. [21]

### Commentary

Two behavior models of human beings appear in the cited verses side by side. As for those who elect to go for the readily available benefits out of their life in this world, and the punishment that comes in its wake, the words used were: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ (Whoever opts for the immediate life herein - 18). These words signify continuity and permanence meaning that this punishment of Hell will materialize only when one's actions are all the time motivated by material interests only, having practically no concern for the Hereafter. And as for 'those who desire to have the Hereafter and its rewards,' the words used were: أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ. The sense is that as soon as a true believer were to form an intention to have the reward of the Hereafter in whatever he proposes to do, that deed of his shall stand accepted - irrespective of any corruptive element having entered into something else he was intending to do.

The first condition can only be that of a denier of the Hereafter, therefore, none of his deeds is acceptable. Then, the second condition is that of a true believer. A particular deed by him that issues forth with sincerity of intention, and is for the Hereafter - along with the presence of other conditions - shall be acceptable. And a deed even from the same person, a deed that has no sincerity, or where other conditions are missing, will not be acceptable.

### **A self-opinionated deed and an act of religious innovation, no matter how appealing, is not acceptable**

In this verse (19), by adding the word: سَعِيًّا (as due), it has been made explicit that every deed and every effort is not necessarily beneficial or acceptable with Allah. Instead, the only deed or effort credible is that which is appropriate to the essential objective (of the Hereafter). And whether or not it is appropriate can only be found out from the statement of Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger ﷺ. Therefore, even well meaning efforts made by insisting on bland personal opinion and self-invented ways - which includes common customs of Bid'ah (innovations in established religion) - no matter how good and beneficial they may appear at their face, but are not appropriate to the effort made for the Hereafter. Consequently, they are neither acceptable with Allah nor are they of any use in the Hereafter.

Explaining the word: سَعِيًّا (as due), Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says that the 'effort' should be in accordance with 'sunnah.' Along with it, it adds that this effort or deed should also have uprightness and firmness. In other words, this deed should be beneficial in accordance with the Sunnah as well as it should be upright and constant. Doing it haphazardly or doing it in a cycle of doing and not doing is not good. It never yields the maximum benefit.

### **Verses 22 - 25**

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُومًا مَّخْذُولًا ﴿٢٢﴾ وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا

كَرِيْمًا ﴿٢٣﴾ وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْنِي صَغِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾ رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ ؕ إِنَّ تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلْأَوَّابِينَ غَفُورًا ﴿٢٥﴾

**Do not set up any other god along with Allah, or you will sit condemned, forsaken. [22]**

**And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and do good to parents. If either of them or both reach old age, do not say to them 'uff' (a word of anger or contempt) and do not scold them. And address them with respectful words, [23] and submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion and say, "My Lord, be merciful to them as they have brought me up in my childhood." [24]**

**Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts. If you are righteous, then He is Most-Forgiving for those who turn to Him in repentance. [25]**

## Sequence

Previous verses mentioned some conditions attached to the acceptance of deeds. One of the conditions required that no deed is accepted unless it comes with 'Īmān (faith, belief) and is in accordance with Shari'ah (Law) and Sunnah (sayings and deeds of the Prophet ﷺ). In the present verses, instructions regarding some of such deeds have been given. These are rules set by the Shari'ah of Islam. Their compliance brings success in the Hereafter and their contravention, ruin. And since the most important of these conditions is that of 'Īmān, therefore, the very first injunction given here was that of belief in the Oneness of Allah (*tauḥīd*). After that come injunctions relating to the rights of the servants of Allah (*ḥuqūq al-'ibād*).

## Commentary

### It is very important to respect and obey parents

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that, in this verse (23), Allah Ta'ālā has made it necessary (*wājib*) to respect and treat parents well by combining it with the command to worship Him. This is similar to what has been said in Sūrah Luqmān where the inevitable need to thank Him has been combined with the need to thank one's parents: اِنْ اَشْكُرْ لِيْ وَلَوْ اِلَـٰدَيْكَ (Be grateful

to Me, and to your parents - 31:14). This proves that, after the obligation of worshipping the most exalted Allah, obeying parents is most important and being grateful to parents like being grateful to Allah Ta'ālā is *wājib* (necessary). This has its confirmation in the Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī where a person reportedly asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "Which is the most favored deed in the sight of Allah?" He said, "Ṣalāh at its (*mustaḥabb*: preferred) time." The person asked again, "Which is the most favored deed after that?" To that he said, "Treating parents well." (Qurṭubī)

### **The merits of obeying and serving parents in Ḥadīth narratives**

1. In the Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah and Mustadrak Ḥākim, it has been reported on sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū 'd-Dardā' ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A father is the main gate of Jannah. Now it is up to you to preserve or waste it." (Maḥzarī)

2. According to a report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ appearing in Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī and al-Mustadrak of al-Ḥākim (which Ḥākim rates as Ṣaḥīḥ), the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The pleasure of Allah is in the pleasure of a father and the displeasure of Allah in the displeasure of a father."

3. Ibn Mājah reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah ؓ that a person asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "What rights do parents have on their children?" He said, "They both are your Paradise, or Hell." It means that obeying and serving parents take one to Jannah and their disobedience and displeasure, to Jahannam.

4. Al-Baihaqī (in Shu'ab al-Īmān) and Ibn 'Asākir have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "For one who remained obedient to his parents for the sake of Allah two gates of Paradise shall remain open. And for one who disobeyed them two gates of Hell shall remain open, and if he had just one of the two, either father or mother, then, one gate (of Paradise or Hell shall remain open)." Thereupon, someone asked, "Does it (the warning of Hell) hold good even when the parents have been unjust to this person?" Then he said thrice: **وَأَنْ ظَلَمَ وَأَنْ ظَلَمَ وَأَنْ ظَلَمَ** which means, 'yes, there is that warning of Hell against disobeying and hurting parents even if they were unjust to the son.' (The outcome is that children have no right to settle scores

with parents. If they have been unjust, it does not follow that they too back out from obeying and serving them).

5. Al-Baihaqī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "An obedient son who looks at his parents with mercy and affection receives the reward of one accepted Ḥajj against every such look cast." People around said, "What if he were to look at them like that a hundred times during the day?" He said, "Yes, a hundred times too (he will keep receiving that reward). Allah is great (His treasures never run short)."

### **The punishment for depriving parents of their rights comes - much before Ākhirah - right here in this world too**

6. In Shu'ab al-'Imān, al-Baihaqī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Bakrah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "As for all those other sins, Allah Ta'ālā defers whichever He wills up to the Last Day of Qiyāmah - except the sin of depriving parents of their rights and disobeying them. The punishment for that is given, much before comes the Hereafter, right here in this world as well. (All Ḥadīth reports given here have been taken from Tafsīr Mazḥarī)

### **Obedience to parents: When necessary and when there is room for opposition**

Muslim scholars and jurists unanimously hold that the obedience to parents is *wājib* (necessary) only in what is permissible - and definitely not in what is impermissible or sinful. Says the Ḥadīth:

لا طاعة لمخلوق في معصية الخالق

There is no obedience to the created in the disobedience of the Creator.

### **To deserve service and good treatment it is not necessary that the parents be Muslims**

To support this ruling, Imām al-Qurṭubī has quoted an event related with Sayyidah Asmā' رضي الله عنها from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. According to this report, Sayyidah Asmā' asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "My mother, a Mushrik, comes to see me. Is it permissible for me to entertain her?" He said, "صِلِي أُمَّكَ" (*ṣilī ummakī*: that is, respect the bond of relationship with your mother and entertain her). And as for disbelieving parents, there is that statement of the Qur'ān itself (Luqmān, 31:15): صَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا

مَعْرُوفًا (that is, if the parents of a person are *kāfirs* and order him too to become like them, then, it is not permissible to obey them in this matter. But, while living in this world, they should be treated in the recognized manner). It is obvious that 'recognized manner' means that they should be treated with courtesy.

### Rulings

1. As long as Jihād does not become an absolute individual obligation (Farḍ al-'Ain), rather remains within the degree of a collective obligation (Farḍ al-Kifāyah), until then, it is not permissible for any son to participate in Jihād without the consent of parents. It has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ that a person presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ in order to have his permission to participate in Jihād. He asked him, "Are your parents alive?" He submitted, "Yes, they are." He said, "فَفِيهِمَا فَجَاهِدْ" (*fafihi mā fajāhid*: Then you carry out Jihād in [the service of] them both). The sense is that 'by serving them alone you will get the reward of being in Jihād.' Another report also adds that the person said, "I have come here leaving my parents crying behind." Thereupon, he said, "Go. Make them laugh as you made them cry." In other words, he was to go back home and tell his parents that he would not be going for Jihād without their consent. (Qurṭubī)

2. From the event reported above, we learn the ruling that anything that rates as a collective obligation - and is not an individual obligation, or necessity - then, sons and daughters cannot do that without the permission of parents. Also included here is the injunction to acquire the most perfect knowledge of religion (the *'ilm* of *dīn*) at the highest level, and to travel to communicate and promote it (the *tablīgh* of *dīn*). It means that anyone who has the knowledge of religion to the measure one is obligated with individually cannot travel in order to become an *'ālim* of *dīn* (scholar of religion), or travel for the *da'wah* and *tablīgh* of *dīn*, for it is not permissible without the permission of parents.

3. Also included under the injunction of treating parents well appearing in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth is good treatment with relatives and friends close to parents, specially when they are dead. In the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The noblest regard one can show to a

father after his death is to treat his friends well." And Sayyidnā Abū Usayd al-Badrī رضي الله عنه reports that he was sitting with the Holy Prophet ﷺ when an Anṣārī came and asked, "Yā Rasūlallah, is it that some right of my parents remains due against me even after they have died?" He said, "Yes. Praying and seeking forgiveness for them, fulfilling the promises they had made to someone, being kind and respectful to their friends and showing mercy and generosity to such relatives who are linked in kinship only through them (*ṣilat* *'r-raḥim*). These are the rights of your parents still due against you, even after them."

It was the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he used to send gifts to lady friends of Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Khadījah رضي الله عنها after her demise which was a way of fulfilling the right of Sayyidah Khadījah on him.

### **Treating parents well: Special consideration in their old age**

As for serving and obeying parents, as parents, it is not restricted to any given time or age. In fact, it is necessary (*wājib*) to treat parents well, under all conditions, and in every age. But, there are circumstances that usually impede the fulfillment of what is necessary and obligatory. Under these circumstances, the typical response pattern of the Holy Qur'ān comes into action to suggest ways and means through which acting according to given injunctions becomes easy. With this objective in sight, it grooms and trains minds through different angles and, at the same time, it continues to emphasize that compliance of these injunctions is imperative despite such circumstances.

The old age of parents, when they become helpless, depend on children for everything they need and their life is at the mercy of children, is a terrible condition to be in. The slightest indifference shown by children at such a time breaks their heart. Then, there are those physical infirmities and diseases associated with old age which make one naturally irritation-prone. Furthermore, during the period of extreme old age, when usual reason and comprehension do not seem to be working, some of their wishes and demands assume the kind of proportions which children find difficult to take care of. The Holy Qur'ān takes cognizance of these circumstances, but, while giving children the instruction to comfort them, it reminds them of their own childhood. It tells them that there was a time when they too were far more helpless, far too depending on

their parents than their parents were on them at that point of time. Then, was it not that their parents sacrificed their desires and comforts for them and went on bearing by the unreasonable child talk with love and affection. Now when they have become so helpless, reason and nobility demanded that the past favor done by them should be paid back. When it was said: كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا (as they have brought me up in my childhood) in the verse, this is what has been alluded to. Some other important instructions relating to the old age of parents have also been given in the verses under study. They are as follows:

1. Do not say even 'uff' to them. Briefly explained parenthetically in the accompanying translation as 'a word of anger or contempt,' 'uff' covers every word or expression that shows one's displeasure. The limit is that breathing a long breath after having heard what they said and thereby betraying displeasure against them is also included under this very word 'uff.' In a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Had there been some other degree of hurting lesser than the saying of 'uff,' that too would have certainly been mentioned." (The sense is that even the thing that hurts parents in the lowest of the low degree is forbidden).

2. Do not scold them: وَلَا تَنْهَرُهُمَا. This is the second instruction. The word: نهى (nahr) in the text: means 'scold' or 'reproach.' That it causes pain in already obvious.

3. Address them with respectable words - (وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا). This is the third instruction. The first two instructions related to the negative aspects where bringing the least emotional pressure on parents has been prohibited. Given in this third instruction is a lesson in the art of conversation with parents - talk to them softly with love, grace and concern for them. Says the revered Tabi'ī, Sa'īd ibn Mussaiyyab, 'like a slave talking to his strict master!'

4. Submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion - (وَاحْفَظْ) (لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ). This is the fourth instruction. The word: جناح (janāh) in the text literally means 'wings' or 'sides of arms' lending the sense that one should stand in a stance of submission and humility as a mark of respect for parents. The addition of the expression: مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ (out of compassion) at the end of the sentence is there to warn that this stance of



grace should not be a mere show-off, instead, it should be adopted on the strong foundation of genuine, heart-felt respect and compassion for them. Perhaps, this may also be suggestive of something else as well - that showing humility before parents is practically no disgrace. In fact, it is a prelude to real honor for it is based on concern, compassion and kindness.

5. And say, "My Lord, be merciful to them" - (وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا). It means, as for the effort to provide maximum comfort for parents, it is humanly not possible. One should do whatever it is possible for him to do in order that they remain comfortable and, then, along with it, he should also keep praying before Allah Ta'ālā that He, in His infinite mercy, removes all their difficulties and makes things easy on them. This last instruction is really so extensive and universal that it still continues to be valid and beneficial even after the death of parents. Through this, one can always keep serving parents.

### Ruling

If parents are Muslims, making a prayer for mercy in their favor is obvious. But, if they are not Muslims, making this prayer within their lifetime will be permissible with the intention that they be delivered from worldly distress and that they be blessed with the *taufīq* of 'Īmān. After their death, making a prayer of mercy for them is not permissible. (Abridged from al-Qurtubī)

### A remarkable event

Al-Qurtubī has reported from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh ؓ that a man came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and complained that his father was taking away what belonged to him. He said, "Go and ask your father to come here." Right then, came Sayyidnā Jibra'īl and told the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "When his father comes, ask him about the words he has composed in his heart and which his own ears have not heard yet." When this man returned with his father, he said to the father, "Why is it that your son complains against you? Do you wish to take away what belongs to him?" The father said, "You better ask him on whom do I spend other than his paternal or maternal aunts or myself?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: إِيَّاهُ (an expression which denoted that he had understood the reality and there was no need to say anything else). After that, he asked the father of the man, "What are those words that have not yet been heard by your own ears?" The father said, "Yā Rasūlallah, Allah Ta'ālā increases our faith in you through everything." Thereby he meant

that he got to know what was not heard by anyone, which was a miracle indeed. Then, he submitted, "It is true that I had composed some lines of poetry within my heart, something not heard even by my own ears." The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Let us hear them." Then he recited the following lines of poetry he had composed:

عَذَوْتُكَ مَوْلُودًا وَمُنْتُكَ يَافِعًا  
تُعَلُّ بِمَا أَجْنَى عَلَيْكَ وَتُنْهَلُّ

I fed you in childhood and took care of you when young. You lived on my earnings alone.

إِذَا لَيْلَةٍ ضَافَتَكَ بِالسَّقَمِ لَمْ أَبْتَ  
لِسَقَمِكَ إِلَّا سَاهَرَا اتَّمَلَّمُ

When on some night, you became sick, I spent the whole night remaining awake and restless because of your sickness

كَأَنِّي أَنَا الْمَطْرُوقُ دُونَكَ بِالَّذِي  
طُرِقْتُ بِهِ دُونِي فَعَيْنِي تَهْمَلُ

As if your sickness was my own and not yours and because of which my eyes kept shedding tears throughout the night

تَخَافُ الرَّدَى نَفْسِي عَلَيْكَ وَإِنِّهَا  
لَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّ الْمَوْتَ وَقْتُ مُوَجَّلُ

My heart kept trembling lest something happens to you, though I knew that the time of death is fixed, being neither early nor late

فَلَمَّا بَلَغْتَ السِّنَّ وَالْغَايَةَ الَّتِي  
إِلَيْهَا مَدَى مَا كُنْتَ فِيكَ أَوْمِلُ

So, when you reached the age and maturity that I had always been looking forward to

جَعَلْتَ جَزَائِي غِلْظَةً وَفِظَاطَةً  
كَأَنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْمُنْعَمُ الْمَتَفَضِّلُ

Then you made hard-heartedness and harshness my return as if you were the one doing me favors and giving me rewards

فَلَيْتَكَ إِذْ لَمْ تَرَعْ حَقَّ أَبَوَتِي  
فَعَلْتَ كَمَا الْجَارُ الْمَصَاقِبُ يَفْعَلُ

Alas, if it was not possible for you to fulfill my right as a father, you could have at the least done what a good neighbor would have done

فَأَوَّلَيْتَنِي حَقَّ الْجَوَارِ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ  
عَلَى بِمَالٍ دُونَ مَالِكَ تَبْخَلُ

So, you could have given me the least right of a neighbor and

abstained from becoming miserly in my case in my own property.

After having heard these verses of poetry, the Holy Prophet ﷺ held the son by his shirt and said, "انت و مالك لايك" meaning that: Go. You and your property, everything belongs to your father. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, p. 246, v. 10) These verses have also been reported in Ḥamasah, the famous book of Arabic literature as attributed to the poet, Umaiyyah ibn Abī aṣ-Ṣult. Others say that 'Abd al-A'la wrote them. Still others attribute them to Abū al-'Abbās al-A'ma. (Al-Qurṭubī, marginal notes)

In the last verse quoted above: رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ (Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts - 25), any possible scruple that remains in the hearts of children as to how they were going to comply satisfactorily with divine injunctions relating to consistent observance of etiquette and respect due to parents. They have to live with parents all the time. Then, living conditions of the parties vary. They do not stay the same all the time. May be, on some such occasion, they happen to utter something, something that turns out to be against the norms of due etiquette, then, they stand facing the warning of Hell. Given this probability, it would become extremely difficult for them to wriggle out from this situation. In this verse, it is to remove this doubt and heart-burning that it was said: Should any such word come to be uttered out of sheer anxiety or lack of discretion - but, without intentional disrespectfulness - then, one must repent and resolve not to do that ever again. If so, since Allah Ta'ālā knows the secrets of hearts and knows what was uttered was not to show disrespect or hurt, things will turn out for the better, for He is Most-Merciful. The word: الْأَوَّابِينَ (*al-awwābīn*: those who turn to Him) used here carries the sense of: التَّوَّابِينَ (*at-tawwābīn*: those who repent before Him). The Ḥadīth calls the six *raka'āt* after Maghrib and the *nawāfil* of al-Ishrāq as the Ṣalāh al-Awwābīn. Embedded here is the hint that the *taufīq* (ability) of these prayers is granted only to those who are the Awwābīn and Tawwābīn.

### Verses 26 - 27

وَاتِذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ، وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيرًا ﴿٢٦﴾ إِنَّ الْمُبْتَلِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطَانِ ط وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا ﴿٢٧﴾

**And give the relative his right, and the needy and the wayfarer. And do not squander recklessly. [26] Surely, squanderers are brothers to satans, and the Satan is very ungrateful to his Lord. [27]**

### Commentary

#### On fulfilling the rights of relatives vigilantly

Previous verses were devoted to teachings about the rights of parents and how they should be duly respected. In the present verses, the rights of common relatives have been taken up with the guideline that a relative should be given his or her right. The least degree in which this could be done is to share with them the graces of good social living and treat them well. And if they are needy, helping them financially - in accordance with one's personal capacity - is also included therein. From this verse, at least this much stands proved that everyone has also been obligated with the fulfillment of the right of one's common relatives. What is it? How much is it? Those details have not been mentioned here. But, a broad based mercy and generosity for relatives and a good social interaction with them are certainly included there. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, financial help can be extended to two kinds of relatives under this very injunction: (1) A relative, in the category of near blood kinship (*Dhū raḥim*), and in the degree of sanguinity precluding marriage (*maḥram*). A woman or child who neither has the wherewithal to eke out an existence nor has the ability to earn for it. (2) Similar is the case of a relative, in the category of near blood kinship, and in the degree of sanguinity precluding marriage. If handicapped or blind, not having enough money and property in his or her possession to eke out an existence, their relatives who have the necessary means should help them both. Taking care of the essential expenses is a duty enjoined on all of them. If there are several relatives in the same degree of extended means, the expenses will be divided over all of them and the subsistence allowance of the needy will be given in this manner. This rule also has its sanction from the verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah which says: وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ (and on the heir it falls likewise - 2:233) (Tafsīr Maḥzarī)

In this verse, it has been said that the necessary financial assistance provided to the needy and the wayfarer, and the mercy and generosity practiced in the case of kinsfolk, was their right. The purpose is to point out that the giver has no reason or occasion to harp on the favor done be-

fore or behind them because their right is his duty. The giver is simply doing his duty and not showering favors on anyone.

### The prohibition of spending wastefully (*tabdhīr*)

The Qur'ān expresses the sense of spending wastefully through two words: (1) *Tabdhīr* (تَبْذِيرٌ), translated as 'squandering recklessly.' (2) *Iṣrāf* (إِسْرَافٌ) : extravagance. The prohibition of *tabdhīr* is already clear in verse 26 here. The prohibition of *isrāf* has its proof in the verse of Sūrah al-A'rāf: وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا (and do not be extravagant - 7:33). Some commentators say that both words are synonymous. Any spending in sin or disobedience or a wrong occasion or place is called *tabdhīr* and *isrāf*. There are others who refine it by saying that *tabdhīr* is spending in sin or on some totally unsuitable occasion or place, while *isrāf* is spending beyond the level of need on an occasion where it is permissible to spend. Therefore, *tabdhīr* is emphatically worse than *isrāf*. Al-Mubadhhdhirīn (the squanderers) were called brothers to Shaiṭān and his cohorts.

Of the early Tafsīr authorities, Mujaḥid has said: If someone spends everything he has for the sake of what is *ḥaqq*, (incumbent), it is no *tabdhīr* (squandering recklessly) - and should he spend even one *mudd* (1/2 kilo) for what is false (non-incumbent), then it is *tabdhīr*. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd (رضي الله عنه) said: Spending out of place in what one has not been obligated with is *tabdhīr*. (Maḥzarī) Imām Mālik said: *Tabdhīr* is that one acquires wealth and property, lawfully and cleanly, as he has been obligated to do, but spends it off in ways counter to it - and this is also given the name of *isrāf* (extravagance), which is *ḥarām* (unlawful).

Imām al-Qurṭubī said: As for things unlawful and impermissible, spending even one *dirham* for these is *tabdhīr*. And spending limitlessly to fulfill permissible and allowed desires - which exposes one to the danger of becoming a needy beggar in the future - is also included under *tabdhīr*. Yes, if someone keeps his real capital holdings in tact and goes on to spend its profit liberally to fulfill his permissible desires, then, that is not included under *tabdhīr*. (Al-Qurṭubī, v. 10, p. 248)

### Verse 28

وَأَمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُلْ لَّهُمْ قَوْلًا

## مِيسُورًا ﴿٢٨﴾

**And if you turn away from them while seeking a bounty from your Lord you are expecting, then speak to them in polite words. [28]**

**Commentary**

What an unusual moral training is being given here in this verse through the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the entire Muslim community! It is being said to them: If people needing help come to you and you have nothing to give to them, and for that reason you are compelled to turn away from them, even then, this act of turning away or excusing yourself should not be with an air of indifference, or with an attitude that could be insulting for the addressee. In fact, this turning away or seeking of excuse should be coupled with an expression of your inability or constraint.

Regarding the background of the revelation of this verse, a report from Sayyidnā Ibn Zaid ؓ says that some people used to ask for financial help from the Holy Prophet ﷺ and he knew what would be given to them would be spent in the spreading of disorder. Therefore, he refused to give it to them, for this refusal was a device to stop them from indulging in disorder. Thereupon, this verse was revealed. (Qurṭubī)

In the Musnad of Sa'īd ibn Mansūr, it has been mentioned on the authority of Sayyidnā Saba' ibn Ḥakam ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had received some supply of cloth. He distributed it over those deserving. After that came some others when the supply was finished and he had nothing to give. It was about the later that this verse was revealed.

**Verses 29 - 30**

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ  
مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّهُ  
كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

**And do not keep your hand tied to your neck, nor extend it to the full extent, lest you should be sitting reproached, empty-handed. [29]**

**Indeed, your Lord expands sustenance for whomsoever He wills, and constricts (for whom He wills). Surely, He is All Aware of His servants, All-Seeing. [30]**

## Commentary

### The instruction for moderation in spending

In this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the direct addressee while the entire Muslim *ummah* is being addressed through him. The purpose is to teach a just and moderate course in spending which does not prevent one from helping others nor does it end up in a lot of trouble for him. There is an event in the background of the revelation of this verse. Ibn Marduwayh has reported it on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ and al-Baghawī, on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ. According to this report, a boy came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said, "My mother asks of you a shirt." At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had no shirt except the one that was on his blessed body. He told the boy, "Come some other time when we have enough means to respond to what your mother is asking for." The boy went back home, and returned and said, "My mother says that you kindly give her the very shirt you have on your blessed body." Hearing this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ took the shirt off and let him have it. His body was left bare. Came the time for Ṣalāh. Sayyidnā Bilāl ؓ called the Adhān. But, when he did not come out as usual, people were worried. When some of them went in, they saw that he was sitting bare-bodied without the shirt. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

### Spending in the way of Allah so liberally as would throw one in trouble: The pros and cons of it

The verse, given the outer view, seems to prohibit the kind of spending following which the spender himself ends up becoming poor and needy, a prey of all sorts of hardships and anxieties. Tafsīr authority, al-Qurṭubī has said that this injunction covers the general condition of Muslims who would, after such spending, find the resulting hardships distressing and the whole thing would make them contrite over past give-outs and grieve about it. The word: مَحْضُورًا (*maḥsūrā*: empty-handed - 29) of the Holy Qur'ān provides a hint in this direction. (As in Tafsīr Maḥzarī) As for the people of high determination, who would not be emotionally disturbed by hardships that may come later and would still go on fulfilling rights of those who hold such rights, this restriction does not

apply to them. This is the reason that it was the customary practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he would not store anything for tomorrow. What came today was spent out today. And there were occasions when he would remain hungry reaching the outer limits of having to tie a piece of rock against his stomach (to simulate the weight of food). Then there were many among the noble Ṣaḥābah who had spent their entire wealth and property in the way of Allah during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who did not categorically prohibit it nor did he blame them for it. This tells us that the prohibition contained in this verse is for those who cannot brave the hardships of poverty and hunger and they would start to rue after spending that they would have been better off if they had not spent in the way of Allah. If so, this attitude would nullify the good they had done in the past. Hence, the prohibition.

### Poorly managed spending is prohibited

And the main thing in the verse is that it prohibits spending haphazardly in the sense that one would ignore what may happen in the near future and spend on the spot. The result is that comes tomorrow, other needy people show up or one is required to take care of a major religious exigency and he would, then, be in no position to help out. (Qurṭubī) Or, he may be rendered equally incapable of fulfilling the rights of his family, something he is duty-bound to fulfill. (Maḥzarī) Explaining the words: مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا (reproached, empty-handed - 29), Tafsīr Maḥzarī says that the first word: مَلُومٌ (*malūm*) relates to the first condition, that is, miserliness - meaning 'if he were to hold back on giving out of miserliness, people would reproach him.' And the word: مَّحْسُورًا (*mahsūrā*) relates to some condition other than this - meaning that 'one should not exaggerate in spending to the extent that he himself becomes a pauper. If so, he will turn empty-handed, defeated and rueful.

### Verse 31

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ ۖ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ ۖ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطَاً كَبِيراً ﴿٣١﴾

And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide sustenance to them and to you, too. Killing them is a great sin indeed. [31]



## Commentary

Previous verses carried a series of instructions regarding human rights. The sixth injunction appearing here is to correct a cruel custom prevailing among the people of Arabs of Jāhiliyyah. During that period of time, some people used to kill their children, particularly daughters, at birth in fear of having to face the expenses on their maintenance. In the verse cited above, Allah Ta'ālā has admonished them for their ignorance in assuming the responsibility of providing sustenance - 'who are you to do that?' This is the exclusive domain of Allah Ta'ālā. He is the One who gives you your sustenance. Now, He who gives it to you shall be the One who would give it to them as well. Why then, do you have to take the onus of killing children on yourselves because of this concern? In fact, by making the children precede as recipients of sustenance at this place, Allah Ta'ālā has subtly indicated that He shall give to the children first, then give it to the parents. It really means that Allah Ta'ālā, when He sees His servant supporting his family or helping others poor and weak, He gives him liberally in proportion to enable him to meet his needs as well as help others. In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "إِنَّمَا تُنصَرُونَ وَتُرْزَقُونَ بِضَعْفَائِكُمْ" which means: 'It is because of the poor and weak among you that you are provided by Allah with your sustenance.' This tells us that parents who support their family get, whatever they do, for the sake of weak women and children alone.

## Ruling

This statement of the Qur'ān also sheds light on an issue which holds the modern world in its grip. Its movers and shakers are so scared of what they call 'population explosion' that they are frantically promoting birth control and planned parent-hood. This is also based on the same false assumption that they are the ones responsible for sustenance. May be, this approach is not a sin equal in gravity to that of the killing of children, but there is no doubt about its being blameworthy.

## Verse 32

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّانِيَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

And do not even go near fornication. It is indeed a

shame and an evil way to follow. [32]

### Commentary

The seventh injunction given here relates to the forbiddance of *zinā* (fornication, adultery). Given here are two reasons as to why it has been forbidden: (1) This is a shame, gross and immodest. Whoever is denuded of modesty is denuded of human nobility itself and is rendered incapable of distinguishing the good from the bad. This is more succinctly said in a Ḥadīth:

إذا فأتاك الحياء فافعل ما شئت

When goes your sense of shame (that could become a barrier against evil), so then, you will do what you will.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has declared sense of shame (*ḥayā*) as a division of faith (ʿImān): 'والحياء شعبة من الإيمان' (al-Bukhārī) (2) It generates limitless social disorder the consequences of which sometimes destroy whole groups of people. In our day all sorts of crimes have increased. If investigated, the reason behind a lot of them would turn out to be some man or woman who did it. Though, this crime is not directly related to the rights of the servants of Allah but it may have been mentioned here as part of other rights taken up at this place for the reason that this crime is contagious. It brings other crimes along which disturb the rights of the servants of Allah through loss of lives and properties. Therefore, Islam has declared this crime to be more serious than any other crime. Then, it has also fixed its punishment as the harshest of all crimes because this one is a carrier of hundreds of these.

It appears in Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The heavens and the earth, the seven of them each, curse the married person who commits adultery. And the strong stench which spreads out from the private parts of such people will embarrass even the people condemned to Hell and thus there in Hell they will be suffering from the punishment of fire and disgrace both." (Reported by al-Bazzār on the authority of Sayyidnā Bura'idah ؓ - Maḥzarī) In another Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A fornicator when fornicating is not a believer. A thief when stealing is not a believer. And a drunkard while drinking is not a believer." This Ḥadīth is there in al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Its explanation, as it appears in the report of

Abū Dāwūd, says: At the time those committing such crimes are practically involved in it, 'Imān (faith) leaves their heart and comes out, and when they turn away from it, 'Imān returns back in. (Maḏharī)

### Verse 33

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوَلِيِّهِ سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يُسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا ﴿٣٣﴾

**And do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity, except for a just reason. And whoever is killed unjustly, We have given his *walīy* (legal heir) authority, but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life. He is surely supported. [33]**

### Commentary

This eighth injunction is about the prohibition of killing unjustly. Virtually all groups, religions and sects of the world take it to be a grave crime. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The destruction of the entire world is lighter in the sight of Allah than the unjust killing of a believer." In addition to this, some reports also carry the words: "Even if the inhabitants of Allah's seven heavens and seven earths were to join in the killing of a believer unjustly, He will put all of them into the Hell." (Ibn Mājah with a chain classified as Ḥasan and al-Baihaqī - from Maḏharī)

And in another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "Whoever abets in the killing of a believer by assisting the killer even with one word will be brought before Allah Ta'ālā on the day of Resurrection. And written on his forehead shall be: آيس مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ (Deprived of the mercy of Allah). (Maḏharī from Ibn Mājah and Iṣbahānī)

And al-Baihaqī reports on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Hopefully, Allah Ta'ālā may forgive every sin except that of the person who died in the state of disbelief (*kufr*) or who killed a believer intentionally and unjustly."

### The meaning of Unjust Killing

Imām al-Bukhārī and Muslim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The blood

of any Muslim who bears testimony that Allah is one and I am His Messenger is not *ḥalāl* (lawful) except under three situations. (1) He has, despite being married, committed adultery (for his legal punishment is that he should be stoned to death). (2) He who has killed a person unjustly [for his punishment is that the *walīyy* (legal heir) of the person killed can get him killed under the law of *qiṣāṣ* (even retaliation)]. (3) A person who has reneged [as an apostate: *murtadd*] from the religion of Islam (for he too is killed in punishment).

### Who has the right to take Qiṣāṣ?

It has been said in this verse that this is the right of the *walīyy* (legal heir) of the person killed. In the absence of a lineal *walīyy*, the head of the Islamic government will have this right - for, he too, in a way, is the *walīyy* of all Muslims. Therefore, in Islamic juristic terminology, the former is called real and the later, legal.

### Injustice is not answered by injustice, but by justice: So, be just even when punishing criminals

The statement: *فَلَا يُسْرِفْ فِي الْقَتْلِ* ('*falā yusrif fi al-qatl*': but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life) is a special provision of Islamic law the outcome of which is that it is not permissible to avenge injustice by counter injustice. Even when retaliating, it is necessary to uphold the demand of justice. Until such time that the legal heir (*walīyy*) of the person killed upholds justice and seeks an even retaliation in favor of the person killed represented by him, through the legal provisions of *Qiṣāṣ*, then, the law of the Shari'ah stands in his favor. The reason is that he is surely supported, and Allah Ta'ālā is the supporter. And in case, he is all blinded by the desire of revenge and exceeds the limits of Islamic legal retaliation, then he, instead of being the one oppressed (*maẓlūm*), became the oppressor (*ẓālim*) while the oppressor (*ẓālim*) became the one oppressed by him (*maẓlūm*). Now things will stand reversed. Allah Ta'ālā and His Law will not support him. Instead, it will support the other party and shield him from injustice.

During the days of the Jāhiliyyah, it was common practice of the Arabs that, in retaliation of a person killed, they would avenge him by killing anyone they could lay their hands on from among the family or friends of the killer. There were occasions when it would turn out that the person killed was someone notable among them. In that case, they

would not take it as sufficient to kill only the killer in even retaliation for their man. In fact, to avenge one life, they would take the lives of two, three or many more men. Some of them would become so crazy in the heat of their passion for revenge that they would not be simply satisfied after having killed the killer. They went on to commit the horror of cutting off body parts such as the nose, ears etc. to serve as deterrents. All such actions are extra to the limits set by the Islamic Law of Even Retaliation (*al-qīṣāṣ*), and are patently *ḥarām* (unlawful). Therefore, such activities have been stopped by the proviso: *فَلَا يُسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ* (but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life).

### An anecdote worth remembering

Someone accused Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf before certain Mujtahid Imāms. Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf is the most notorious tyrant of Islamic history. Since, he has killed thousands of Ṣaḥābah and Ṭabī'īn unjustly, therefore, it generally happens that people tend to overlook the evil lurking behind calling him evil. The pious elder before whom this accusation was leveled against Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf asked the accusers, "Do you have any authority or evidence to support your accusation?" They said, "No." Then he said, "If Allah Ta'ālā will avenge the unjust killing of thousands of innocent people by Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, remember that anyone who is unjust to Ḥajjāj will also not be allowed to escape from that revenge. Allah Ta'ālā will wreak vengeance of Ḥajjāj from him too. There is no partisanship in the justice of Allah Ta'ālā, therefore, it is not possible that He would release others to go about maligning His sinning servants by giving them a free hand to accuse and blame them at will.

### Verses 34 - 35

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ ۖ وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ ۚ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٤﴾ وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كِلْتُمْ وَزَنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٣٥﴾

**And do not go near the property of an orphan except in a manner that is good, until he comes to his maturity. And fulfill the covenant. Surely, the covenant shall be asked about. [34]**

**And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a straight balance. That is good, and better in the end. [35]**

### **Commentary**

Mentioned in the two verses cited above, there are three injunctions: the ninth, the tenth and the eleventh. They relate to financial rights. It will be recalled that previous verses dealt with physical rights while the financial ones appear here.

### **Caution in handling the property of orphans**

The ninth injunction given in the first verse (34) concerns the protection of properties owned by orphans and the observation of caution in their handling. Laying emphasis on it, it was said: 'And do not go (even) near the property of orphans.' It means that there should be no free use of their property counter to the provisions of the Shari'ah or the interest and advantage of the children. Those who are charged with the protection and management of the properties of orphans are duty-bound to observe utmost caution therein. When spending, they must spend only in the interest and to the advantage of orphans - and definitely not as based on their whim or lack of concern. And this pattern of management is to continue until such time when the orphaned children grow up and become capable of protecting their property themselves - the lower limit is when they attain to the age of fifteen years while the higher is eighteen years.

The fact is that it is just not permissible to spend from anyone's property through false means. But, it has been mentioned here in the case of orphans particularly because they themselves are incapable of keeping or taking account and no one is expected to know about it. So, a place where no one is present to demand one's right is exactly the place where the demand of Allah Ta'ālā becomes stronger and harder. Any shortfall in disbursing such rights becomes more sinful as compared to the rights of common people.

### **Fulfillment of Covenants and Implementation of Contracts**

The tenth injunction enjoins the fulfillment of the covenant. There are two forms of the covenant. The first form has two aspects to it: (1) Between Allah and His servant, like the covenant of the servant in eternity that Allah is their Lord. This covenant necessarily results in

obedience to His injunctions and the seeking of His pleasure. This is a covenant every human being has made in eternity irrespective of whether he or she is a believer or a disbeliever. (2) The second covenant is the covenant of a believer made through *shahādah* or professing of the *kalimah*: لا اله الا الله (*lā ilāha illallāh*: there is no god but Allah) the outcome of which is a perfect following of Divine injunctions and the seeking of His pleasure.

The second form of the covenant takes effect between human beings themselves. This includes all treaties, pacts, agreements, pledges and contracts - political, commercial, or transactional - that are made between individuals or groups or institutions all over the world.

The fulfillment of all covenants identified in the first form is obligatory on human beings. As for the other kind of covenants or contracts, it is also obligatory to fulfill them subject to the condition that they should not be against the Islamic Law. As for those that are against the Islamic Law, it is obligatory to terminate them - after having first served a notice on the other party. If one of the parties does not fulfill, the other party has the right to go to the court and make them fulfill it. Essentially, a contract is an agreement between two parties that they would do or not do something. And in case, someone unilaterally promises to someone else that he would give him a certain thing or meet him at a certain time or take care of a certain task for him, then, it is also obligatory to fulfill this promise. There are commentators who include this too under the sense of covenant, but they do so with a slight difference. We know when two parties are bound by a contract, any contravention by one of them can be challenged in the court and the other party can force its completion. But, the fulfillment of a unilateral promise cannot be enforced through the court. Of course, if someone were to go back on the promise made to someone else - without any valid legal excuse permitted by the Shari'ah - he will be committing a sin. In Ḥadīth, this has been called hypocrisy in acts.

At the end of this verse, it was said: إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا (Surely, the covenant shall be asked about). It means: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, the way questions shall be asked about the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of obligatory divine injunctions, so it will be with mutual contracts - these too

will be asked about.' Here, it has been left at that only: 'it will be asked about.' What is going to happen next after the questioning? This has been left untold. Perhaps, intended as such, it may be signaling towards the danger being great!

The eleventh injunction enjoins fulfillment of weights and measures in transactions of buying and selling and forbids any short measuring. Full details appear in Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn (83).

### **Ruling**

Respected jurists of Islam say that the outcome of the injunction against shortening weights and measures is that it is *ḥarām* (unlawful) to give less than whatever is the due of whoever it may be. Therefore, it is also included therein that an employee curtails the assigned duty entrusted with him or gives a time that is less than what should actually be given to it, or that a worker shirks work and fails to deliver what is due out of it.

### **The prohibition of giving weights and measures short:**

#### **Ruling**

Regarding the verse: *أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كِلْتُمْ* (And give full measure when you measure - 35), Abū Ḥayyān says in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ that the responsibility of giving full weight and measure in this verse has been placed on the seller ( *بائع* : *bā'i* ) which tells us that it is the seller who is responsible for weighing, measuring and seeing that it is full as due.

At the end of verse 35, it was said about the fulfillment of weight and measure: *ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا* (That is good, and better in the end). As for making the weight and measure correct and even, two things have been said here: (1) Firstly, the rule is good. It means that it is intrinsically good. No normal and decent person is going to take weighing less and measuring short as something nice, neither religiously, nor rationally, nor naturally. (2) Secondly, it is better in the end. The end includes the consequent success of the Hereafter, reward of deeds and the blessing of Paradise as well as the happy outcome of the very life in this world. This is suggestive of the fact that no business can prosper until its goodwill stands recognized in the market - and that cannot happen without this commercial honesty.



## Verses 36 - 38

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ  
 أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۚ إِنَّكَ لَنَ  
 تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَنَ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا ﴿٣٧﴾ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ  
 عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا ﴿٣٨﴾

And do not pursue that which you have no knowledge of. Surely, the ear, the eye and the heart - each one of them shall be interrogated about. [36]

And do not walk on the earth haughtily. You can neither tear the earth apart, nor can you match the mountains in height. [37]

That which is evil, of all these, is detestable in the sight of your Lord. [38]

## Commentary

Two injunctions in these verses, the twelfth and the thirteenth, relate to mores of common social living. The twelfth injunction forbids doing something without having become certain about it.

At this stage, we should not lose sight of the fact that certainty has different degrees. There is a degree of certainty that reaches the level of perfect certitude, a state that leaves no room of even the slightest doubt contrary to it. Then, it could descend to the degree of strong likelihood - even though, there does exist the probability of a contrary aspect. Similarly, divine injunctions are also of two kinds: (1) Absolutes and Certainties, such as, Articles and Principles of Religion. These require certainty of the first degree. Acting without it is not permissible. (2) Strong Likelihood or Overwhelming Probability, the example of which are injunctions relating to subsidiary deeds. After having given these details, we can state the objective of the cited verse by saying that the element of certainty in injunctions that are Certain and Absolute should also be of the first degree. In other words, it should have attained the degree of perfect certitude and absolute category. And until this happens, this pseudo certainty is not trustworthy in the matter of the basic Articles and Principles of Islam. Acting on its dictates is not permissible. As for the subsidi-

ary injunctions, a certainty of the second degree, that is, of Overwhelming Probability is sufficient. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

### **Questions will be asked on the day of Qiyāmah about the ear, the eye and the heart**

This is what we have been told in verse 36: **إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ** : كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولٌ : It means that the ear will be asked as to what did it keep hearing throughout its life. The eye will be asked as to what did it keep seeing throughout its life. The heart will be asked as to what did it keep cooking in its chambers and what was it that it believed in throughout its life. If things were heard through the ears, the hearing of which was not permissible in Shari'ah, such as hearing ill of someone behind his back (*ghībah*) or hearing unlawful vocal and instrumental music etc., then, punishment will follow the question. If things were seen through the eyes, the seeing of which was not permissible, such as casting an evil eye on a non-Maḥram woman or a beardless, handsome youth etc. then, punishment will follow the question. Or, planted a belief in the heart contrary to the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, or nursed a baseless blame in the heart regarding someone, then, punishment will follow the question. The fact is that, on that fateful day of Qiyāmah, questions will be asked about virtually all blessings given by Allah Ta'ālā. It was said in Sūrah at-Takāthur: **لَتَسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ** : "And you shall certainly be asked on that day [of Qiyāmah] about all blessings [of Allah Ta'ālā] - 102:8." Since, the ear, the eye and the heart are more important and significant out of these blessings, these were mentioned here particularly.

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Mazḥarī give yet another sense of the verse in terms of the close proximity of the statement in the first sentence and the next. In the first sentence, it was said: **لَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ** (And do not pursue that which you have no knowledge of - 36). Adjacent to it follows the statement that the ear, the eye and the heart - each one of them shall be interrogated about. The sense that emerges from this proximity is that a person who blamed someone without first ascertaining and becoming certain about it, or did something impulsively without doing that first, then, should this thing be related to what is heard through ears, the ears shall be questioned. And if this is 'seen', the eyes shall be questioned. And if comprehended through the heart, the heart shall be questioned to determine whether this person is true or false in his blame or

in the belief he has allowed to become rooted in his heart. Thereupon, these very body parts shall speak up as witnesses on the day of Resurrection. It will be a cause of disgrace for those who accuse others without being certain and those who do things the truth of which has not been ascertained first. This is as it appears in Sūrah Yā Sīn: **الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ** **وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ** "Today [on the day of Qiyāmah] We shall set a seal on their mouths and their hands shall speak and their feet shall bear witness as to what they have been earning [by making these limbs of their body do whatever of good or bad they chose] - 36:65".

Perhaps, the ears, the eyes and the heart have been particularized here on the basis that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed man with sense and consciousness through them. The purpose is to let him first ascertain, examine, and test a thought or belief that crosses his heart. If he finds it true, and sound, let him, then, put it in practice. And should it turn out to be false, let him, then, stay away from it. Anyone who does not use these faculties and goes about following things he has no knowledge of, things the truth of which he has not ascertained first, then, this person is guilty of being ungrateful to these blessings of Allah Ta'ālā.

Now, the senses through which man becomes aware of different things are five: the ears, the eyes, the nose, the faculty of speech and the sensation in the whole body that tells one about something being hot or cold. But, habitually man finds out more through the ears and eyes. Awareness about things acquired through the senses of smell, taste and touch is fairly lower in frequency as compared to things heard or seen. That it has been considered sufficient to mention only two of the five senses at this place may, perhaps, be because of this very reason. Then, even from among these two, it is the ear that has been made to precede the eye - and on other occasions of the Holy Qur'ān as well, wherever these two has been mentioned, it is the ear that has been mentioned first. In all likelihood, the reason for it is that the major part of man's information is comprised of things heard through the ears. Things seen through the eyes happen to be comparatively much less.

The thirteenth injunction appearing in the second of the two cited verses (37) is: **وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا** (And do not walk on the earth haughtily). It means that one should not walk in a way that shows arrogance, pride and exultation, for this is an idiotic act. It is as if one would like to

tear the earth apart just by walking on it - something not in his power to accomplish. Or, as if by walking with a challenging gait, he would like to rise much higher - but the mountains of Allah rise far higher than he could ever beat anatomically. In reality, arrogance as such is a major sin that can afflict human heart mortally. Therefore, one must guard against even signs of arrogance exhibited through the way one goes about in life, for they too are impermissible, after all. Walking haughtily, even though one may not be walking by exerting force on the earth, and assuming airs and posing high are impermissible under all conditions. Arrogance is to take yourself superior to others and rate others to be inferior to you. Severe warnings against it appear in Ḥadīth.

Imām Muslim has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Iyād ibn 'Ammār ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā has sent this command to me through revelation: Take to humility. Let no man pride on another man, nor adopt an attitude of self-eminence and let no one be unjust to anyone." (Maẓharī)

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Not to enter Paradise is he who has arrogance in his heart even to the measure of a particle" (Maẓharī with reference to the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim).

And it has been reported in Ḥadīth Qudsī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā says that grandeur is My mantle and greatness is My breech. Whoever tries to snatch these from Me, him I shall put in Jahannam (The words *ridā'* and *izār* signify dress and Allah Ta'ālā has no mass or body that would need a dress. Therefore, at this place, it means the attribute of divine glory. So, whoever betrays the wish to become associated with Allah Ta'ālā in this attribute belongs to Hell).

And in another Ḥadīth the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, arrogant people will be raised as humans scaled down to the size of tiny ants under the shadow of disgrace descending from all sides. They will be driven to a prison of Hell called Bulas. It will be surrounded with blazing fire, the highest around, and they will be drinking pus and blood excreted by the inmates of Hell to quench their thirst." (Tirmidhī on the authority of 'Amr ibn Shu'aib, he from his

father, he from his grandfather - Maḏharī)

And speaking from the pulpit, Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ said, "I have heard from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that a person who takes to humility, Allah Ta'ālā elevates him to higher ranks following which he is, though, insignificant in his own sight, but he is great in the sight of everybody else. And whoever waxes proud, him Allah Ta'ālā puts to disgrace following which he is, though, great in his own sight but he is, in the sight of people, worse than a dog and pig." (Maḏharī)

After having described details of the injunctions appearing above, it was said in the last verse: كُلُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا (That which is evil, of all these, is detestable in the sight of your Lord - 38).

As for what has been forbidden in the said injunctions, their repugnance is obvious. But, within these there are some commandments where rights of parents and relatives have been enjoined or fulfillment of promises has been made mandatory. Here too, the purpose is to avoid doing the opposite of it, like hurting parents, breaking off from relatives and going back on solemn promises. Since all these things are *ḥarām* or reprehensible, therefore, it has been called '*makrūh*' in a general sense of 'detestable' which includes the *ḥarām* and *makrūh* both. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

### Note

The injunctions described in the fifteen verses cited above are, in a way, the explanation of the effort acceptable in the sight of Allah mentioned in: وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا (and makes effort for it as due - 19). There it was said that not every effort is acceptable with Allah. Instead, the effort made in accordance with the Sunnah and teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the only one acceptable with Him. Main divisions of such acceptable effort have been mentioned in these injunctions which take up the rights of Allah first and then the rights of the servants of Allah.

### A gist of Torah in fifteen verses

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ said that the commandments of the entire Torah have been reduced to fifteen verses of Sūrah Banī

Isrā'īl. (Mazhari)

## Verses 39 - 44

ذَلِكَ مِمَّا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ ۖ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا  
 آخَرَ فَتُلْقَىٰ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَّدْحُورًا ﴿٣٩﴾ أَفَأَصْفُكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِالْبَنِينَ  
 وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنَاثًا ۚ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُولُونَ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ  
 صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِيَذَّكَّرُوا ۚ وَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا ﴿٤١﴾ قُلْ  
 لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ إِلَهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذَا لَابَتَّغُوا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا  
 ﴿٤٢﴾ سُبْحَنَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤٣﴾ تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ  
 السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ ۚ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ  
 بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا ﴿٤٤﴾

This is part of the Wisdom your Lord has revealed to you. And do not set up any other god along with Allah, lest you should be thrown into Jahannam, blamed, rejected. [39]

Is it, then, that your Lord has chosen you to have sons and has Himself taken females from among the angels? Surely, you are saying something terrible. [40]

And surely, We have explained things in various ways in this Qur'ān, so that they may take advice - and it increases nothing in them but aversion. [41]

Say, 'Had there been other gods along with Him', as they say, 'then they would have found out a way to the Lord of the Throne'. [42] Pure is He, and Exalted, immensely above what they say. [43]

All the seven skies and the earth and all those therein extol His purity. And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity and praise, but you do not understand their extolling. Surely He is Forbearing, Most-Forgiving. [44]

### Commentary

According to the proof of Tauḥīd (the Oneness of Allah) given in the verse: إِذَا لَاقَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا (then they would have found out a way to the Lord of the Throne - 42), Allah alone is the creator, owner and master of the entire universe. The argument is if it was not so and He had other partners in this godhead, differences would have necessarily emerged among them. And, in the eventuality of a difference, the whole universal system would have gone to ruins - because, ever abiding peace among them is habitually impossible. Though, this argument has been enunciated here in a prohibitive manner, but there are books of Scholastic Theology ('Ilm al-Kalām) where the logical rationale behind this argument has also been described in great details. The learned may consult these at their discretion.

### The meaning of Tasbīḥ (glorification of Allah) said by the heavens and the earth and everything present therein

Among these, the Tasbīḥ of Allah said by all angels and believing *jinn* and human beings is self-evident. Everyone knows that. As for disbelieving human beings and the *jinn*, they obviously do not say it. Similarly, there are other things in this universe about which it is said that they are insensate, devoid of reason and intelligence. How do we rationalize their act of saying Tasbīḥ? Some 'Ulamā' say that their Tasbīḥ is circumstantial, state-articulated, the testimony of their state of being - because, the collective condition of everything other than Allah Ta'ālā is telling us that it is neither permanent existence-wise nor survival-wise. This whole ongoing condition has been activated under the power and control of some supreme power - this testimony is its Tasbīḥ.

But, other investigative scholars say that volitional Tasbīḥ of Allah is particular with angels and believing *jinn*s and human beings. But, in terms of the state of His orientation towards what He has created, Allah Ta'ālā has cast every particle of this universe into the mould of a chanter of His glory. As regards those who do not believe, or do not believe in institutional religion, they too generally subscribe to God and His greatness. Then, there are materialists, atheists, and modern-day communists who do not obviously subscribe to the existence of God. But, the

truth of the matter is that the very existence of theirs, inclusive of all that constitutes it, is compulsively busy glorifying Allah - just as trees, rocks and dust and a zillion other things are busy recounting the glory of the most true Allah. But, this act of glorification, this *Tasbīḥ* they are all engaged in, is built-in, compulsively ingrained and is responding to the call of the creational imperative. Common people do not hear it. The statement of the Qur'ān: وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ (but you do not understand their extolling [the act of glorifying Allah] - 17:44) proves that this originally and elementally ingrained act of extolling Allah performed by everything en masse is something common people cannot understand. As far as circumstantially discernable act of extolling is concerned, intelligent people can identify it readily. This tells us that the act of extolling we are talking about is not simply a testimony of the incumbent's state of existence in the universe. It is real - though, beyond our comprehension. (As mentioned by al-Qurṭubī)

As for the phenomenon of pebbles saying *tasbīḥ* (glory be to Allah) in the blessed hand of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and which was clearly heard by the noble Ṣaḥābah, it is obviously a miracle. But, Shaykh Jalāluddīn as-Suyūṭī while explaining this Ḥadīth in al-Khaṣāiṣ al-Kubrā has said that pebbles saying *tasbīḥ* is not the miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As regards pebbles, they say *tasbīḥ* wherever they are. In fact, what is his miracle is that once the pebbles were in his blessed hand that *tasbīḥ* said by them became audible.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has declared this refinement as weightier and has supported it with many proofs from the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. For example, it was said about Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in Sūrah Ṣād: إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ (We subjugated the mountains with him which used to glorify Allah, evening and morning - 48:18). And it was said about rocks in a verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَنْ يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ (and there are still others [rocks] which fall down in fear of Allah - 2:74). This proves that rocks have consciousness, sense and the fear of Allah. Then, refuting Christians calling Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام Son of God, it was said in a verse of Sūrah Maryam: وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَذَا أَنْ دَعَا لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَكَدَا (and the mountains fall down crumbling that they attribute to the Rahmān [Most-Merciful



Allah] a son - 19:90,91). Again, it is evident that mountains crumbling in fear are indicative of their consciousness and sense. And once it is conceded that they have sense and consciousness, the saying of *tasbīḥ* by them should not be considered something improbable.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه said, "a mountain says to the other mountain, 'say, O brother, has a man ever gone across you, someone who was good at remembering Allah?' If it says, 'yes,' this mountain is pleased with him." For his proof, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd recited the verse: وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا (And they say, "the Raḥmān [Most-Merciful Allah] has taken a son" - 19:88). After that, he said, "this verse proves it that mountains are affected by listening to words of blasphemy (*kufr*) and are, thereupon, seized by fear. This being the truth, do you think that they listen to what is false and do not listen to what is true (*ḥaqq*), do not hear Allah being remembered (*dhikr*) and are not affected by it?" (Qurtubī with reference to Raqā'iq ibn Mubārak) And the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "there is no *jinn*, man, tree, rock and common clod of earth that hears the call of the Muezzin (*mu'adhdhin*), and does not bear witness to his faith and righteousness on the day of Qiyāmah." (Mu'aṭṭā Imām Mālik and Sunan Ibn Mājah on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه).

Imām al-Bukhārī رحمه الله عليه has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه, who said, "we used to hear the sound of *tasbīḥ* (glory to Allah) said by the food when it was being eaten." And a variant appears in another report where it is said, "when we ate with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, we used to hear the sound of *tasbīḥ* said by the food." And as narrated by Sayyidnā Jābir ibn Samurah رضي الله عنه, it appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I know the rock of Makkah al-Mukarramah that used to say '*salām*' to me before the call of prophet-hood - and I know it even now." Some say, 'the reference is to al-Ḥajar al-Aswad.' Allah knows best.

Imām al-Qurtubī رحمه الله عليه has said that Ḥadīth reports relating to such matters abound. As for the story of Uṣṭuwanah Hannānah (the dried tree serving as a column for support when the Holy Prophet ﷺ

gave his Khuṭbah in the Masjid), it is common knowledge among Muslims all over the world. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ bypassed it while starting to deliver his Khuṭbah from a regular *mimbar* (stepped-platform), the noble Ṣaḥābah heard the sound of wailing coming from it.

After all these reports, why should it remain so far out to realize that everything in the heavens and the earth has consciousness and sense and that everything really glorifies Allah. Ibrāhīm رحمه الله تعالى says that this *tasbīḥ* is universal. It includes the animate and the inanimate both. So much so that the least sound made by the panels of doors are not devoid of *tasbīḥ*. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said, 'If this glorification of Allah was a state-articulated *tasbīḥ*, why was it made so particular to Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in the verse referred to a little earlier? A state-articulated *tasbīḥ* is something every discerning human being can sense out from everything. This makes it obvious that this *tasbīḥ* was spoken, verbally and audibly.

### Verses 45 - 48

وَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ  
حِجَابًا مَّسْتُورًا ﴿٤٥﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي  
أُذُنِهِمْ وَقْرًا وَإِذَا ذَكَرْتَ رَبَّكَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَحْدَهُ، وَلَوُا عَلَى آدْبَارِهِمْ  
نُفُورًا ﴿٤٦﴾ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْهُمْ  
نَجْوَى إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا ﴿٤٧﴾ أَنْظِرْ  
كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٨﴾

And when you recite the Qur'an, We place an invisible curtain between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter. [45] And We put covers on their hearts, so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears. And when you refer to your Lord alone in the Qur'an, they turn their backs in aversion. [46]

We are fully aware of what they listen for, when they lis-

**ten to you, and when they are in secret consultation: when the transgressors say, "you are following none but a bewitched man." [47]**

**See how they have coined similes for you, so they have gone astray and cannot find a way. [48]**

## Commentary

### Can Magic affect a Prophet?

A prophet being affected by magic is as possible as being affected by sickness. Therefore, blessed prophets are not devoid of or detached from human characteristics. For instance, they could be wounded, run temperature or feel pain. Similarly, they could also be affected by magic because, that too, is triggered by the influence of physical causes, such as those of the Jinn. And it also stands proved from Ḥadīth that there was an occasion when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was affected by magic. As for the disbelievers calling him 'bewitched' ('*mashūr*') in verse 47 which the Qur'ān has refuted for the reason that they really meant to call him 'insane.' (Bayān al-Qur'ān) Therefore, the Ḥadīth of magic is not contradictory.<sup>1</sup>

The subject taken up in the first two verses (45, 46) has a particular event as a background. According to al-Qurṭubī reporting on the authority of Sayyidnā Sa'id ibn Jubayr ؓ, when Sūrah al-Masad/al-Lahab (111) beginning with: **بَيِّنْتُ يَدَايَ لَهَبٍ** was revealed in the Qur'ān, it also condemned the wife of Abū Lahab. She went to the place where the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to sit with his Companions. At that time, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ was present there. Noticing her coming well ahead of her arrival, he said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "if you move away from here, it will be better. This woman has a sharp tongue. She will say things which may cause you pain." He said, "no, Allah Ta'ālā will put a curtain between me and her." So, she reached there but when she could not see the Holy Prophet ﷺ anywhere around, she turned towards Sayyidnā

1. Moreover, the magic or sorcery can affect a prophet only to cause a physical illness. It can never have an adverse effect on performing their functions as prophets. The disbelievers used to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ 'bewitched person' in this later sense which was totally impossible in his case, while the ḥadīth refers to the physical illness suffered by the Holy Prophet ﷺ which was caused by an act of magic. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه and said, "your companion has satirized us in poetry." Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said, "By Allah, he is no composer of poetry, much less that of the kind in which people are satirized (*haju*)." Thereupon, she left in a huff saying, "you are no more than a verifier for him." After she was gone, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه submitted, "didn't she see you?" He said, "as long as she was here, an angel kept obstructing the view between me and her."

### A Qur'anic formula of remaining hidden from enemy sight

'On occasions when the Holy Prophet ﷺ wished to remain hidden from the sight of the Mushriks,' says Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه, 'he would recite three verses of the Holy Qur'ān. Such was its effect that the disbelievers were unable to see him.' Those three verses are:

1. إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا (Surely, We have put covers on their hearts, so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears - Sūrah al-Kahf, 18:57).
2. أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ (Those are the ones Allah has put a seal on whose hearts and hearing and vision - Sūrah an-Nahl, 16:108).
3. أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشْوَةً (Have you seen the one who has taken his own desire as god while Allah has let him go astray because of knowledge [his or His] and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and placed over his vision a veil - Sūrah al-Jāthiyah, 45:23).

Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه says that he related this thing about the Holy Prophet ﷺ to a Syrian who had to go to adjoining Byzantium on a certain business. He went there and stayed for a long time until the local disbelievers started harassing him. When he escaped from there, they pursued him. At that time, he remembered that narrative and recited the three verses identified there. It so happened as if a screen was placed on their eyes why they could not see this person who was walking on the same pathway the enemies were passing by.

Imām Tha'labī says that he related this narrative of Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه to a resident of the town of R'ay. It so happened that he was put under arrest by the disbelievers of Dailam. For some time he remained under detention with them. One day he got his chance to escape. They

pursued him, but this person also recited those three verses. The effect was immediate. Allah Ta'ālā screened their eyes in a manner that they were unable to see him - though, they were walking side by side with their clothes touching his clothes.

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that the verses from Sūrah Yā Sīn which were recited by the Holy Prophet ﷺ at the time of Hijrah may also be added to the three verses cited above. This was when the Mushsriks of Makkah had besieged his house. He recited those verses and went right through them. In fact, he went by throwing dust on their heads and none of them knew anything about it. Those verses of Sūrah Yā Sīn are:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَسَّ ۝١ وَالْقُرْآنَ الْحَكِيمَ ۝٢ إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝٣ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ۝٤ تَنْزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ ۝٥ لِنُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أُنذِرَ آبَاؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ ۝٦ لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝٧ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِيْ أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالًا فَهِيَ إِلَى الْأَذْقَانِ فَهُمْ مُّقْمَحُونَ ۝٨ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَعْشَيْنَهُمُ فَهُمْ لَا يَصِيرُونَ ۝٩

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Yā Sīn. By the wise Qur'ān, surely you [O Muhammad] are from among the messengers, on a straight path. [This is] a revelation of the Mighty, the Very Merciful, that you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are unaware. The word has already taken effect against most of them, so they do not believe. Surely, We have placed shackles on their necks reaching down to their chins, so they are with heads forced high up. And We have placed before them an obstruction and behind them an obstruction and covered them, so they do not see - Sūrah Yā Sīn, 36: 1-9)

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that he himself went through an incident in the Manthūr Castle of al-Qarṭubah in his own country of al-Andalūs (Spain). I ran in front of the enemy and sat in a corner. The enemy sent two horsemen after me. I was on open grounds. There was nothing to obstruct the view between us. But, I was reciting these verses of Sūrah Yā Sīn. Both these horsemen passed by me. Then they went back towards where they had come from, saying, 'this person must be some devil,' be-

cause they could not see me. Allah Ta'ālā had turned them blind as far as I was concerned. (Qurṭubī)

### Verses 49 - 52

وَقَالُوا إِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرَفَاتًا إِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا ﴿٤٩﴾ قُلْ كُونُوا حِجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا ﴿٥٠﴾ أَوْ خَلْقًا مِّمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ ۖ فَسَيَقُولُونَ مَنْ يُعِيدُنَا قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۖ فَسَيُنْغِضُونَ إِلَيْكَ رُءُوسَهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هُوَ ۖ قُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَرِيبًا ﴿٥١﴾ يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ وَتَظُنُّونَ إِن لَّبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٥٢﴾

And they say, "Once we are reduced to bones and dust, is it then that we shall be raised, created anew?" [49] Say, "Be you stones or iron [50] or any creation you deem harder in your hearts." Thereupon they will ask, "Who will bring us back?" Say, "The One who created you the first time." So, they will shake their heads before you and say, "When shall that be?" Say, "May be, it is near." [51] (It will be) on a day when He will call you, and you will respond praising Him and you will think you did not stay (on the earth) but for a short while. [52]

### Commentary

The word: يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ (He will call you) in: يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ (on a day when He will call you, and you will respond praising Him - 52) is a derivation from: دُعَاءُ (*du'ā'*) which means to call out for someone by announcing it vocally. The sense is that the day when Allah Ta'ālā will call everyone to come to the plains of Resurrection, this calling will be through Angel Isrāfīl. When he sounds the second trumpet, the dead will come alive and assemble on the plains of Resurrection. It is also possible that, once alive, a call goes through to all of them to assemble there. (Qurṭubī)

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, you will be called out with your name and the name of your father, therefore, give yourself good names (avoiding the absurd ones)." (Qurṭubī)

## Even disbelievers will rise praising Allah on the day of Resurrection

The word: *إِسْتِجَابَةً* (*istijābah*) in: *فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ* (and you will respond praising Him - 52) means to respond on being called by someone and be present before him. The sense is 'when you will be called to present yourselves on the plains of Resurrection, all of you will obey that call and assemble there. The word: *بِحَمْدِهِ* (*biḥamdihī*: praising Him) is the state of the nominative pronoun in: *تَسْتَجِيبُونَ* (*tastajībūn*: you will respond) which releases the sense of *ḥāmidīn* (حَامِدِينَ) that is, those praising Him. Thus, the outcome is that all of them will present themselves praising Allah while coming to those fateful plains.

As outwardly obvious, the verse does seem to indicate that this will be the state of all, believers or disbelievers - they both will rise praising Allah. But, the real addressees here are the disbelievers. It is about them that it is being said they all will rise praising Allah. From among Tafsīr authorities, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رحمه الله has said that the disbelievers too will rise from their graves saying: *سُبْحَانَكَ وَبِحَمْدِكَ* (Pure are You and to You belong all praises), but their act of praising at that hour will be of no use to them. (Qurtubī) The reason is not far to see. When these people see life after death, the words of praise for Allah will escape their mouth involuntarily. This will be no deed deserving recompense.

Some commentators have said that this state has been particularized with believers. They argue that, regarding the disbelievers, the Qur'ān has only this to say: (1) When they rise, they will say, *يُولَدْنَا مَنْ بَعَثَنَا* (Woe be to us! Who made us rise from our resting-place? - Sūrah Yā Sīn, 36:52). (2) And according to another verse, they will say, *يُخَسِرُنِي عَلَىٰ* 'مَا قَرِطْتُ فِي حُتْبِ اللَّهِ' (O my remorse [is boundless] over what I have neglected on the side of [obedience to] Allah! - Sūrah az-Zumar, 39:56).

But, the truth of the matter is that there is no likelihood of a contradiction between these two sayings. May be, in the beginning, all rise praising. Later, when disbelievers are separated from believers as said in Sūrah Yā Sīn: *وَأَمَّا زُورًا الْيَوْمَ أَيُّهَا الْمُجْرِمُونَ* (But today, O criminals, you stand out distinctly apart - 36:59), they will also say what appears in the cited

verses. Then, it stands proved from many explications of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah that stations of Resurrection will be different with a corresponding difference in the states and conditions of people in each of these. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said that rising in Resurrection will begin with the praise of Allah with everyone doing it when rising and on it will end all matters. This is as it was already said: وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (And matters between them have been settled in accordance with the truth and it was said: All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds - az-Zumar, 39:75)

### Verses 53 - 55

وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُبِينًا ﴿٥٣﴾ رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِنَّ يَشَأْ يَرْحَمَكُم أَوْ إِنَّ يَشَأْ يُعَذِّبَكُمْ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلًا ﴿٥٤﴾ وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّينَ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زُبُورًا ﴿٥٥﴾

And tell My servants that they should speak that which is best. Surely, Satan creates discord among them. Indeed, Satan is an open enemy to mankind. [53]

Your Lord knows you best. If He so wills, He will have mercy on you and if He so wills, He will punish you. And We have not sent you to be responsible for them. [54]

And your Lord knows best about all those in the heavens and the earth. And We have certainly granted excellence to some prophets over the others. And We gave Dāwūd the Zabūr (the Psalms). [55]

### Commentary

**Using foul or harsh language is not correct, even against infidels**

The first verse (53) prohibits Muslims from talking harshly to disbelievers. It means that a hard line should not be taken unnecessarily, and should there be the need, even killing would be in order - as succinctly



put in two lines of Persian poetry:

کہ بے حکم شرع آب خوردن خطاست و گر خون بفتویٰ بریزی رواست

Whereas, without an injunction of the Sharī'ah, to drink water is a sin,

In another case, to shed blood under Fatwā is permissible!

Since it is possible to suppress the aggressive might of disbelievers and their hostility to Islām through fighting and killing (as an inevitable measure of defense), therefore, it is allowed. However, by using foul language and harsh words, neither a castle stands conquered nor anyone guided right, therefore, it has been prohibited. Imām al-Qurṭubī said that this verse was revealed in the background of an event relating to Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ. It so happened that someone used foul language against Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ who retaliated harshly and wanted to kill him. This posed the danger of a war breaking out between their two tribes. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

And according to the interpretation of Imām al-Qurṭubī, this verse contains a guideline for Muslims as to how they should address each other. It suggests that they should not speak harshly at the time of mutual difference, for this is a trap door through which the Shaitān pushes them into mutual infighting and disorder.

That Zabūr (the Psalms) has been mentioned particularly in the last sentence of verse 55: **وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا** (And We gave Dāwūd the Zabūr) has been done, perhaps, because Zabūr reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be a ruler along with being a messenger and prophet. This is as it appears in the Qur'ān: **وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ** (And We have already written in the Zabūr, after the [previous] mention, that the land is inherited by My righteous servants - al-Anbiyā', 21:105).

At this stage, Imām al-Baghawī says in his Tafsīr that Zabūr is a book of Allah revealed to Sayyidnā Dāwūd ﷺ. It has one hundred and fifty *sūrahs* or chapters and all *sūrahs* are restricted to praises of Allah and prayers to Him. The areas of lawful and unlawful, obligations and limits have not been taken up there.

## Verses 56 - 58

قُلْ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ فَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ كَشْفَ الضَّرِّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٥٦﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَى رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ ۚ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ مَحْذُورًا ﴿٥٧﴾ وَإِنْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُوهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۚ كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا ﴿٥٨﴾

Say, "Call those whom you assume (to be gods), besides Him, while they have no power to remove distress from you nor to shift it." [56]

And those whom they invoke, do themselves seek the means of closeness to their Lord as to which of them is the closest, and they hope for His Mercy and fear His punishment. Indeed, the punishment of your Lord is to be feared. [57]

And there is no town but We are to destroy it before the Doomsday or punish it with severe punishment. That is what stands written in the Book. [58]

## Commentary

The word '*al-wasīlah*' in: يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَى رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ (seek the means of closeness to their Lord - 57) conveys the sense of that which is used as a means of reaching someone. As for reaching Allah, the *wasīlah* or means is to always keep the pleasure of Allah in sight when learning or doing anything while adhering to the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* strictly. Thus, the sense of the sentence is that all of them are seeking the closeness of Allah Ta'ālā through their righteous deeds.

About the sentence which follows immediately after: يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ (hope for His Mercy and fear His punishment - 57), Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh said: Hope and Fear, that is, hoping for mercy from Allah as well as fearing Him are two different states one is in. When they stay at par, one keeps on course, correct and stable. And if any one of the two overcomes the other, one finds the equilibrium of his spiritual state subjected to disorder to the measure of that imbalance. (Qurṭubī)

## Verses 59 - 60

وَمَا مَنَعَنَا أَنْ نُرْسِلَ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا أَنْ كَذَّبَ بِهَا الْأَوَّلُونَ ۖ وَآتَيْنَا ثَمُودَ  
النَّاقَةَ مُبْصِرَةً فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا ۖ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا تَخْوِيفًا ﴿٥٩﴾ وَإِذْ  
قُلْنَا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ ۖ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا  
فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَالشَّجَرَةَ الْمَلْعُونَةَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ ۖ وَنُخَوِّفُهُمْ ۖ فَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ  
إِلَّا طُغْيَانًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٦٠﴾

And nothing made us refrain from sending the signs except that the earlier people had belied them. And We gave Thamūd the she-camel, an eye-opener, then they did wrong to her. And We do not send signs but to warn.

[59]

And (remember) when We said to you that your Lord encompasses all humans. And We did not make the scene but We showed to you a test for the people - and the tree cursed in the Qur'ān also. And We warn them, yet it adds to nothing but their enormous rebellion. [60]

## Commentary

The word '*fitnah*' (فِتْنَةً) appearing in verse 60: وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً (And We showed you the scene [in the Night of Ascent - al-Mi'rāj] only to make it a test for the people) is used in the Arabic language to convey many different meanings. It could mean falling into error and going astray, or trial or test or some disorder or upheaval as well. At this place, the probability of all these meanings exists. Early Tafsīr authorities - Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, Ḥasan, Mujāhid and others - have taken '*fitnah*' as carrying the last sense given above. They have said that this '*fitnah*' was that of apostacy (*Irtidād*) which relates to the time when the Holy Prophet ﷺ told people about Mi'rāj, how he went on his nocturnal journey to Baitul-Maqdis, to the heavens from there and his return to Makkah al-Mukarramah before dawn. There were many neo-Muslims who had yet to become staunch in their faith fell into the error of belying his statement and turned apostates. (Qurṭubī)

It also stands proved from this event that the word 'رُءْيَا' (*ru'ya*) is though also used in the Arabic language in the sense of dream but, at

this place, what is being recounted is no matter of some dream. Had that been the case, there was no reason why people would become apostates. Dreams are dreams. Everyone can see such dreams. In fact, the purpose of employing the word: رُءْيَا (*ru'ya*) at this place is to show that the marvel was witnessed while awake. While commenting on this verse, some commentators have interpreted it to be referring to other events too besides the event of Mi'rāj. But, they do not apply here as a whole. Therefore, the majority of commentators have declared the event of Mi'rāj alone as the relevant subject of this verse. (As described in detail by al-Qurṭubī)

### Verses 61- 65

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ۖ قَالَ ءَسَجِدُ  
لِمَنْ خَلَقْتُ طِينًا ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ لَنْ يَنْ  
أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ لَاحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ اذْهَبْ  
فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاءُكُمْ جَزَاءً مَوْفُورًا ﴿٦٣﴾  
وَأَسْتَفْزِزْ مَنْ اسْتَطَاعَتْ مِنْهُمْ بَصُوتُكَ وَأَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِمُ بِخِيلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ  
وَشَارِكُهُمْ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ وَعِدَّهُمْ ۖ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا  
غُرُورًا ﴿٦٤﴾ إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ ۖ وَكَفَى بِرَبِّكَ  
وَكَيْلًا ﴿٦٥﴾

And (remember) when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Adam." So, they prostrated, except Iblīs (Satan). He said, "Shall I prostrate before the one You have created from mud?" [61] He added, "Tell me, this one whom You have honoured above me; if You give me respite till the Doomsday, I shall subdue his progeny, except a few of them." [62] He (Allah) said, "Go then, for whoever of them follows you, the Hell shall be the recompense of you all - a full recompense. [63] And entice with your voice those of them you can, and rally against them your horsemen and your footmen, and share with them in their wealth and their children, and make promises to them" - and Satan promises them nothing but delusion -

[64] "As for My servants, you have no control over them.  
And your Lord is enough to look after (everything)." [65]

### Commentary

The word: لَاحِثِينَ (subdue) in verse 62 is from: اِحتَنَاكَ (ihtināk) which means to exterminate or uproot something, or to subdue and overpower it completely. (Qurṭubī) The word: وَاسْتَفْزِزْ (and entice) in verse 64 is from اِسْتَفْزِزْ (istifzāz) which basically means to cut off or to tear away from and at this place it means to tear away from the path of truth. This is followed by صَوْتُ (with your voice). Ṣawt (صَوْتُ), the Arabic word for voice is well known. What is the voice of Satan? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās says: The voices of songs, musical instruments and the hullabaloo of fun and games are the voices of Satan that he employs to tear people away from the path of truth. (Qurṭubī) This tells us that (singing or listening to) music and (playing or listening to) musical instruments are prohibited. (Qurṭubī)

While refusing to prostrate before Sayyidnā 'Ādam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, Iblīs (the Satan) had said two things:

(1) That 'Ādam was created from mud and he was from fire and that there was no reason why mud was given precedence over fire. This question was an effort to find out the wisdom of the order given to him before he could comply with the Divine command - something the one so commanded has no right to ask. That Allah, the Exalted, would let the commanded one have the right to demand the wisdom of His command is far out specially when we see in our everyday life that human beings themselves would not give their servant the right to say no to them. Think of a master asking his servants to do something and the servant demanding the master that he should first explain the wisdom of that assignment. Therefore, this question was considered unworthy of an answer and no answer was given. In addition to that, the answer is already obvious. Giving precedence to something over the other is the prerogative of the Being that created and nurtured everyone. Whenever and whatever He declares to be superior becomes exactly so.

(2) Secondly, he had said if he was given respite till the day of Qiyāmah, he will mislead the entire progeny of 'Ādam, except a few of them. That Allah Ta'ālā has elected to answer in the later verses. He

said that the Satan will have no control over His sincere servants even if he were to rally his entire forces against them and as for the insincere who fall into his trap, they will meet the same fate as his, all consigned to Hell. When this verse (64) mentions the horsemen and footmen of the Satanic army, it does not necessarily mean that the Satan actually has combat support in that formation. In fact, this is a manner of referring to the full force and power of the Satan. And if the Satan does have horsemen and footmen actually, even that too cannot be denied. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ said: Those who come out in support of disbelief and sin, horsemen or footmen, they are nothing but the army of the Satan. Now remains the question as to how the Satan came to know that he would succeed in enticing and misleading the progeny of 'Ādam, the basis on which he claimed that he will subdue them. There are two possibilities. Perhaps, by looking at the ingredients that went into the making of man, he had gathered that man would be desire-prone and it would not be difficult to entice him successfully. And then, it is also not far out to believe that his very claim was nothing but a bland lie.

As for the sense of: وَشَارِكُهُمْ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ (and share with them in their wealth and their children - 64), Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ said: Wealth and property acquired by false, impermissible and unlawful means or spent on what is *ḥarām* is the sharing of the Satan in it. As for the sharing of the Satan in children, it could either be through illegitimacy, or by naming them like disbelievers and polytheists, or by indulging in polytheistic customs to ensure their security, or by taking to *ḥarām* sources of income to bring them up. (Qurṭubī)

### Verses 66 - 70

رَبُّكُمُ الَّذِي يُزْجِي لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ  
كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُونَ  
إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجَّيْكُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ أَعْرَضْتُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا ﴿٦٧﴾  
أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ

لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ وَكِيلًا ﴿٦٨﴾ أَمْ أَمِنتُمْ أَنْ يُعِيدَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أُخْرَى  
فَيَرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِّنَ الرِّيحِ فَيَغْرِقَكُمْ بِمَا كَفَرْتُمْ ۖ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا  
لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا بِهِ تَبِيعًا ﴿٦٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَهُمْ فِي  
الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَهُمْ عَلَىٰ كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا  
تَفْضِيلًا ﴿٧٠﴾

**Your Lord is the One who causes ships to sail for you through the sea, so that you may go in quest of His bounty; surely, He is Ever Merciful for you. [66]**

**And when you face a hardship at sea, forgotten are those whom you used to invoke, except Him (Allah). Then, once He brings you safe to the land, you turn away (from Him). And man is so ungrateful. [67] Do you, then, feel secure from that He makes a part of the land sink down along with you, or that He sends down a rain of stones on you, whereupon you will find no one to protect you? [68] Or, do you feel secure from that He takes you back to it (the sea) once again, and sends a heavy storm of wind upon you which drowns you for your disbelief, whereupon you will find no one to pursue your case against Us? [69]**

**And We bestowed dignity on the children of 'Ādam and provided them with rides on the land and in the sea, and provided them with a variety of good things and made them much superior to many of those We created.**

[70]

## Commentary

### Why are the children of 'Ādam superior?

The last of the verses cited above mentions the superiority of the children of 'Ādam over most of the Divine creation. Here, we have to consider two things: (1) What are the attributes and reasons of this superiority? (2) What is the sense of the statement in the verse: 'made them much superior to many of those We created'?

(1) The first question can be answered in detail by saying that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed the children of 'Ādam with such multi-dimensional attributes as are not found in many of those He has created. The beauty of

form and features, the balance of body, the balance of temperament and the balance of height and built are good examples. These attributes bestowed on human beings are not found in other living forms in that balanced measure. In addition to that, they have been endowed with distinct reason and intelligence through which they get things done up and down in the universe of their experience. Allah Ta'ālā has given them the built-in capability to compound and manufacture, from out of what has been Divinely created, materials and things which serve them in living, moving, eating and wearing in all sorts of ways.

No less is their gift of communication, speech, comprehension, understanding and explanation. This remains unmatched by other living forms. Using signs and symbols to communicate what lies in one's heart and telling others what one thinks and feels through letters and writings are all manifestations of the signal human distinction. Some scholars have said that eating with the fingers of the hand is also a particular human attribute. Other than man, all animals eat with their mouth. The practice of compounding edibles with different things in order to make these delicious and beneficial is the way of human beings alone. Animals eat things that are single and simple. Some would eat raw meat, others would go by grass or some fruit. However, they all eat simples. It is man alone who prepares food through compounding all sorts of solids, liquids, spices and herbs (which has, in our day, assumed the status of the highly publicized art of cuisine). Then, there is the most pronounced superiority of reason and intelligence through which human beings are supposed to recognize their Creator and Master, find out what He likes and dislikes and do what He likes and avoid what He dislikes. Thus, in terms of reason and intelligence, the created have three kinds. Common animals have desires but no reason and intelligence (as we understand it). The angels have reason and intelligence, but do not have desires. Human beings have both. They have reason and intelligence as well as desires. This is the reason why, when he suppresses his desires through reason and intelligence and succeeds in saving himself from indulging in things disliked by Allah Ta'ālā, he reaches a station which is even higher than that of many angels.

(2) We can now turn to the sense of the statement that the children of 'Ādam were made much superior than many of those Allah created. As



for the superiority of the children of 'Ādam over all created forms in the world, higher and lower, and all animals, it cannot be disputed by anyone. Similarly, the Jinn are like human beings in terms of reason and intelligence. That human beings are superior to them as well is accepted by all. What remains now is the case of angels. Who is superior, man or angel? What can be authentically said about it is that common righteous believers among human beings, such as the men of Allah, are superior to angels in general. But, special angels, such as Jibrā'īl and Mikā'īl and others, are superior to the common righteous believers while special believers, such as the blessed prophets عليهم السلام, are superior even to special angels. As far as disbelievers and sinners among human beings are concerned, they just cannot be compared with angels. In fact, they are not even superior to animals in terms of the real purpose of life, that of seeking success through righteousness. About them, the Holy Qur'ān has already given its verdict: **أُولَٰئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلَّ هُمْ أَضَلُّ** (They are like cattle. Rather, they are much more misled - 7:179) (Tafsīr Maḥzarī). Allah knows best.

### Verses 71 - 72

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أَنَسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ ۖ فَمَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ يَمِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَقْرَأُ وَنَ كِتَابُهُمْ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَىٰ وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٧٢﴾

(Think of) the Day We will call every people with their books of deeds. So, whoever is given his book in his right hand, then, such people will read their book and they shall not be wronged even a bit. [71]

And whoever is blind in this (world) will be blind in the Hereafter and far more astray from the path. [72]

### Commentary

The word: **إِمَام** (Imām) in the first sentence of verse 71: **يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أَنَسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ** translated as '(Think of) the Day We will call every people with their book of deeds' appears here in the sense of 'book' as in Sūrah Yā Sīn: **وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ** (and We have enumerated everything in a clear book - 36:12). Here, **إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ** means a clear book. Then, '*kitāb*' is called '*imām*' for the reason that, in the event of some error or difference, one

turns to the book very much like turning to a religious leader who is followed. (Qurtubī)

And it also appears from a Ḥadīth of Tirmidhī as narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه (Tirmidhī calls it Ḥasan Gharīb) that, 'imām' in this verse means 'kitāb.' The words of the Ḥadīth are given below:

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أَنَسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ قَالَ يُدْعَى أَحَدُهُمْ فَيُعْطَى كِتَابُهُ بِمِصْنَرِهِ

Explaining the verse يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أَنَسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ (71), the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself said: One of them will be called and his book of deeds will be given in his right hand. (From a lengthy Ḥadīth)

It also stands established from this Ḥadīth that 'imām' has been used here in the sense of 'book', and that 'kitāb' signifies the 'book of deeds.' (Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has, therefore, translated 'imām' as the 'book of deeds')

Also reported from some commentators, including Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رحمته الله and Mujāhid, is the meaning of 'imām' as religious leader. It means that everyone is to be called as the follower of a certain leader - whether they be blessed prophets or their deputies, the Shaykhs and the 'Ulamā', or leaders who have been inviting people to error and sin. (Qurtubī)

Given this meaning, the sense of the verse would be that everyone will be called by the name of his or her leader and all those so called will be assembled at one place. For example, there will be the followers of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, the followers of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā 'Isā عليهما السلام and the followers of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. Then, possibly the names of those will also be called out who are their direct instructors or leaders (such as 'Ulamā' and religious guides).

### The Book of Deeds

As it appears from several verses of the Holy Qur'ān, only disbelievers will be given the book of deeds in the left hand. This is as it is said in the verse: إِنَّهُ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ (Indeed, he was not used to believing in Allah, the Great - al-Ḥāqqah, 69:33) and also in another verse: إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ يَحُورَ (Indeed, he surmised that he would never return - al-Inshiqāq, 84:14). In the first verse quoted above, faith has been negated explicitly while the second carries a denial of the Hereafter - which too is disbelief after all.

This comparative look tells us that those who shall get their book of deeds in the right hand will be the people of faith, pious or sinner. The believer will read his or her book of deeds in delight. In fact, the happy believer will have others read it too. This happiness will be because of having one's 'Imān (faith) intact and because of deliverance from eternal punishment - though, punishment may also come for some deeds.

How the book of deeds will be given in the right or the left hand is something not mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. But, the expression: **تَطِيرُ الْكُتُبُ** (causing the books fly) has appeared in some Aḥādīth (reported by Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ). And in some narrations of Ḥadīth, it appears that all books of deeds will be there at one place under the 'Arsh (Throne). Then a wind will blow and cause these to fly and reach the hands of people in a manner that some will get it in their right hand and some others in the left. (Reported by al-'Uqailī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ) (Bayān al-Qur'an from Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

### Verses 73 - 77

وَأِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهُ،<sup>٧٣</sup>  
وَإِذَا لَا تَخَذُوكَ خَلِيلًا ﴿٧٤﴾ وَلَوْ لَا أَنْ تَبْتُلَكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَ تَرْكَنُ  
إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٥﴾ إِذَا لَا ذَقْنَا ضِعْفَ الْحَيَاةِ وَضِعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ  
ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٦﴾ وَأِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوكَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ  
لَيُخْرِجُوكَ مِنْهَا وَإِذَا لَا يَلْبَثُونَ خِلْفَكَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾ سَنَّةً مِنْ قَدْ  
أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٧٨﴾

And surely, they were about to tempt you away from what We have revealed to you, so that you forge something else in Our name, and in that case they would have certainly made you a friend. [73]

And had We not made you firm, it was likely that you would have inclined towards them a little. [74]

In that case, We would have surely made you taste a double (punishment) in life and a double (punishment) after

death, then you would not have found anyone to help you against Us. [75]

And they were likely to harass you in the land, so that they could expel you from there. And in that case, they would have not lived (there) after you, but a little. [76] Such has been Our way with the messengers We sent before you. And you will find no reversal in Our way. [77]

### Commentary

Out of the verses appearing above, the first three relate to a particular event. To determine it precisely, Tafsīr Maẓharī carries some relevant reports. The event which is closer and more supportive in terms of the indicators set in the Qur'ān is what has been reported by Ibn Abī Ḥātim as based on a narrative of Sayyidnā Jubayr ibn Nufayr ؓ. According to this report, some chiefs of the Quraysh of Makkah came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said: 'If you have been really sent to us, you should remove these poor and broken down people from around you, for sitting with such people is a matter of insult for us. If you do that, we too will become your companions and friends.' When they said this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ somewhat leaned towards the idea that he might do something like that as suggested by them in the hope that they may, perhaps, become Muslims. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Through this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sounded that their suggestion was a *fītnah* and the friendship they were talking about was also a *fītnah* (a trial or test or a ruse to tempt him into creating discord in his ranks). Therefore, he should not accept it. After that, the text says: Had your Lord not been particular about your grooming and fortitude, it was not too far out that you could have come somewhat closer to tilting towards their proposal.

From this verse, says Tafsīr Maẓharī, it is clearly understood that there was just no probability of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ever tilting towards such absurd demands from the Quraysh disbelievers. Yes, coming close to tilting, and that too within a very insignificant limit, was probable. But, by making him *ma'ṣūm* (protected, infallible), Allah Ta'ālā saved him from drifting even to that limit. If we were to think about it, this verse provides a great proof of the highest moral disposition with which all prophets عليهم السلام were blessed. So, had there been even no shield of

prophetic infallibility, still such was the natural disposition of the Prophet of Islam that tilting towards the absurd proposal of disbelievers would have never been possible for him. However, there did exist the probability of his coming somewhat closer, in an insignificant measure, towards the act of tilting - something terminated by the prophetic infallibility.

After that, it was said: إِذَا لَادَقْنَكَ الضَّعْفَ الْحَيَوَةَ وَضَعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ It means: Supposing the impossible, if you would have come closer to tilting towards their wrong move, your punishment would have been double in life and double after death (in the grave or the Hereafter, because even an insignificant error made by those close to Allah is considered to be very grave). What has been said here is almost the same as was said about the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَن يَأْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ يُضَعَّفُ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ (O wives of the Prophet, whoever of you should commit a clear act of immodesty, the punishment for her will be multiplied doubly - 33:30).

Istifzāz in: وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفْرِزُواكَ (And they were likely to harass you - 76) literally means to cut off, or tear away from, or to provoke into moving from a place. At this place, the sense is to expel the Holy Prophet ﷺ from his station at Makkah or Madīnah. The verse means: Had they done that, their punishment would have been that they themselves would have not been able to live there much longer after you. This is the description of another event. There are two reports about it. One event relates to Madīnah al-Ṭayyibah. The Jews of the city came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They told him: 'O Abū al-Qāsim ﷺ, if you are true in your claim to be a prophet, you should go and live in Syria because the land of Syria is the land of al-Maḥshar (the Resurrection) and the land of prophets too.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ was somewhat impressed by what they said and when he traveled to Syria at the time of the battle of Tabūk, the idea of taking up residence in Syria was still on his mind. But, the revelation of the verse: وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفْرِزُواكَ (And they were likely to harass you - 76) at that time stopped him from doing so. After presenting this report, Ibn Kathīr has, however, declared it to be unsatisfactory.

As an alternate, he points out to another event which transpired in Makkah al-Mukarramah and which, according to him, is the point of reference in this verse for the fact that this Sūrah was Makki provided a strong coherence for it. As the event goes, once the Quraysh disbelievers

intended to expel the Holy Prophet ﷺ from Makkah al-Mukarramah. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā revealed the verse: كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوكَ where the Quraysh disbelievers were warned that in the event they expelled the Holy Prophet ﷺ from Makkah, they too would not be sitting in Makkah in peace any longer. This is the event Ibn Kathīr considers to be the weightier choice as the point of reference in the verse. Then, he goes on to explain that this warning of the Holy Qur'ān was seen come true by the disbelievers of Makkah with their own eyes. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated from Makkah al-Mukarramah, they were unable to sit there in peace even for a day. It was within a period of a year and six months that Allah Ta'ālā made them assemble on the plains of Badr where seventy of their chiefs were killed and their initial aggressive power was broken. Then came the final outcome of the battle of 'Uḥūd which made them more awe-stricken, and the last confrontation of the battle of al-Aḥzāb virtually broke their back. It was in the eighth year of Hijrah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ conquered the whole of Makkah al-Mukarramah.

The last verse (77): سَنَّةٌ مِمَّنْ قَدْ آرَسَلْنَا (Such has been Our way with the messengers We sent ...) tells us that, according to the customary way and law of Allah Ta'ālā, when a people expel their prophet from his homeland, or compel him to leave by scaring and harassing, then, those people too are not left to continue living there. They are visited by the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā.

### Verses 78 - 82

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِلدُّلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ  
الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا ﴿٧٨﴾ وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ عَلَى عَسَىٰ أَنْ  
يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا ﴿٧٩﴾ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ادْخُلْنِيْ مُدْخِلَ صِدْقٍ  
وَأَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَأَجْعَلْ لِّيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطٰنًا نَّصِيرًا ﴿٨٠﴾  
وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ۖ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا ﴿٨١﴾ وَنُنَزِّلُ  
مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۖ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا  
خَسَارًا ﴿٨٢﴾

Establish *ṣalāh* between the decline of the sun and the darkness of the night, and the recital at dawn. Surely, the recital at dawn is well attended. [78] And during the night, wake up for *ṣalāh*, an additional prayer for you. It is very likely that your Lord places you at a Praised Station. [79]

And say, "O my Lord, make me enter a rightful entrance and make me exit a rightful exit, and grant me from Your Own a power, favoured (by You)." [80] And say, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Falsehood is surely bound to vanish." [81]

And We reveal the Qur'ān which is cure and mercy for the believers. And it adds nothing to the unjust but loss. [82]

## Commentary

### Ṣalāh is the best defense against enemy hostility

Previous verses have mentioned the hostility of the enemies of Islam, the plans they made to hurt and harass the Holy Prophet ﷺ and what was to be done in response. By giving the Holy Prophet ﷺ the command to establish Ṣalāh in the verses cited above, it is being suggested that it is the best remedy against the mischief made and pain caused by enemies. This is similar to what has been said more clearly in a verse of Sūrah al-Hijr: *وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ* It means: "And indeed We know that your heart feels distressed for what they say. So, proclaim the purity and glory of your Lord, and be among those who prostrate." (Qurṭubī)

This verse declares devotion to the remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) through His praises (*ḥamd*) and His glorification (*tasbīḥ*) and Ṣalāh (prayer) as the panacea of pains inflicted by enemies. Dhikr and Ṣalāh are special safety shields against their aggressive designs. Then, it is also not far out to believe that staying safe against the pain inflicted by enemies depends on the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā. So, the best medium of acquiring this help is Ṣalāh as stated in the Holy Qur'ān: *وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ* (Seek help through patience and prayer - 2:153).

### The injunction of five prayers

The majority of leading Tafsīr authorities has declared this verse to be a comprehensive injunction for all five daily prayers. The reason is

that the word: دُلُوكْ (*dulūk*) is essentially used in the sense of 'decline' and the decline of the Sun begins at the time of meridian - though, it could also be applied to the sunset. But, at this place, the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Tabi'in have taken the word: دُلُوكْ (*dulūk*) to mean the post-meridian decline of the Sun. (as explained in details by al-Qurṭubī, al-Maḥḥarī and Ibn Kathīr).

The word: غَسَقَ اللَّيْلَ (*ghasaq*) in the next phrase: إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ means the darkness of the night when it is complete. Imām Mālik has reported this very Tafsīr of 'ghasaq' from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه.

Thus, within the statement: لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ (between the decline of the Sun and the darkness of the night), four prayers stand covered. These are Zuhr, 'Aṣr, Maghrib and 'Ishā'. And also identified there is the time when two of these prayers begin, that is, the time of Zuhr begins from the decline (*zawāl*) of the Sun and the time of 'Ishā' from: غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ (*ghasaq al-layl*) that is, at the time when the darkness of night is complete. Therefore, the great Imām, Abū Ḥanīfah has ruled that the time of 'Ishā' begins from the time when, after the red glow, the white glow of the evening also disappears. Everyone knows that, close to the sunset, a red glow appears on the western horizon and, soon after this redness, there spreads a sort of whiteness on it. Then, this whiteness too disappears. It is obvious that the darkness of the night will be complete only when the whiteness of the horizon also goes away. Therefore, these words support the view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Other Imāms have ruled that the time of 'Ishā' begins after the disappearance of the red glow on the evening horizon and that this is the Tafsīr of 'ghasaq al-layl' (the darkness of night).

In the next phrase: وَتُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ (*wa Qur'ān al-fajr*: translated as 'and the recital at dawn'), the word: 'Qur'ān' denotes Ṣalāh at this place because the Qur'ān is an integral part of Ṣalāh. Most Tafsīr authorities - Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, Maḥḥarī and others - have adopted this very meaning. Therefore, the sense of the verse is that the words: دُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ (between the decline of the Sun and the darkness of the night) carried a description of four prayers. Identified now is the fifth prayer, that of Fajr. It has been described separately which is an indicator of the particular importance and merit of this Ṣalāh.



The word '*mashhūd*' in the expression: كَانَ مَشْهُودًا (*kāna mashhūdā*) has been derived from *shahādah* that means 'to be present.' This is a time when, according to clear statements in authentic Aḥādīth, both groups of angels, those of the night and those of the day, present themselves for Ṣalāh. Therefore, it has been called '*mashhūd*' (hence, translated as 'well-attended'). The injunction of five prayers has appeared in this verse briefly. It has been explained fully by the Holy Prophet ﷺ through his word and deed - and unless one acts in accordance with this explanation, no one can perform Ṣalāh. I just do not know how those who claim to understand the Qur'ān without Ḥadīth and the statements of the Rasūl of Allah go about making their Ṣalāh? Similarly, in this verse, the recital of the Qur'ān within the Ṣalāh has also been mentioned briefly. As for its details, it stands proved from the word and deed of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the recitation in the Fajr prayer should be long - to the measure of strength and ability, less than that in Zuhr and Jumu'ah, average in 'Aṣr and 'Ishā' and very brief in Maghrib. As for the mention of a long recitation in Maghrib and very brief in Fajr in some reports, it stands practically abandoned. Imām al-Qurṭubī carries the *riwāyah* of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim in which the recitation of long Sūrahs like Sūrah al-A'raf and Mursalāt in the Ṣalāh of Maghrib, or the recitation of only the Mu'awwadhatin (the last two Sūrahs) as sufficient in the Ṣalāh of Fajr have been reported. He, then, comments: فمتروك بالعمل ولا نكاره على معاذ التطويل وبإمره الأئمة بالتخفيف. It means that these incidentals of long recitation in Maghrib and brief in Fajr stand abandoned in the light of the constant practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well as his verbal sayings. (Qurṭubī)

### The time of the Ṣalāh of Tahajjud: Injunctions and rulings

The word: تَهَجَّدُ (*tahajjud*) in: وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدُ بِهِ (And during the night, wake up for Ṣalāh - 79) has been derived from هَجَّدَ *hujūd*. This word is used for two opposite meanings, that of sleeping and that of waking both. But, the words: وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدُ بِهِ, at this place, mean 'be awake with the Qur'ān in a part of the night' because the pronoun in: بِهِ (*bihi*: with it) reverts back to the Qur'ān. (Maḥzarī). 'Being awake with the Qur'ān' means the making of Ṣalāh (with full compliance of what it requires). This very nightly prayer is called the prayer of Tahajjud in the terminology of Shari'ah. Speaking generally, the sense in which it has been taken is that the prayer said after waking up from a short sleep is the Tahaj-

jud. But, according to Tafsīr Maḥzarī, the sense of the verse is no more than sacrificing sleep to make Ṣalāh during some part of the night. This sense holds good for sleeping a little, then waking up from it and making Ṣalāh. Very similarly, it is also good if one begins by postponing sleep for Tahajjud and makes the Ṣalāh. The condition that one has to sleep before doing the prayer of Tahajjud is not found in the words used by the Qur'an. Apart from this, there are reports from Aḥādīth which support this general sense of Tahajjud.

And the definition of the prayer of Tahajjud reported from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī by Imām Ibn Kathīr also confirms this element of generality. The words of the report are as follows:

قال الحسن البصري هو ما كان بعد العشاء ويحمل على ما كان بعد النوم

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says: The prayer of Tahajjud holds good for every prayer that is said after al-'Ishā' And, (because of actual practice) it will be applied to that which is said after some sleep. (Ibn Kathīr)

The outcome is that being after sleep is no condition in the real sense of the prayer of Tahajjud - and this condition is not present in the words of the Qur'an as well. But, speaking generally, it has been the constant practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions that they used to do their Tahajjud prayer after waking up in the later part of the night, therefore, this would be the better way of doing it.

### Is the prayer of Tahajjud Farḍ (obligatory) or Nafl (additional)?

The words: نافلة : *nafl* and نافلة : *nāfilah* in: نافلة لك (an additional prayer for you - 79) literally mean 'additional.' Therefore, prayer (Ṣalāh) and charity (*ṣadaqah*, *khairāt*) etc. that is not obligatory or necessary and, the doing of which brings *thawāb* (reward), and not doing which entails no sin or misconduct, are called *nafl*. In this verse, by looking at the words: نافلة لك (an additional prayer for you) with the prayer of Tahajjud, it is summarily understood that the prayer of Tahajjud is particularly associated with the Holy Prophet ﷺ as *nafl* for him. The fact, though, is that its effect as *nafl* is shared by all, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his entire *ummah*. Therefore, some respected early commentators have taken '*nāfilah*' at this place as an attribute of *farīdah* or duty. The meaning given by them is that the Muslim community at large is obligated with five

daily prayers only, but Tahajjud has also been made an additional obligation on the Holy Prophet ﷺ. So, at this place, the word: نافلة *nāfilah* appears in the sense of an additional obligation, not in the general sense of *nafl*.

Let us look at the correct investigative position in this matter. When, during the early stage of Islam, Sūrah al-Muzzammil was revealed, that was a time when five prayers had yet to be obligated. What everyone was obligated with was the prayer of Tahajjud. This obligation has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Muzzammil (73). Then, it was in the night of the Mi'rāj (Ascent) that five prayers were made obligatory (*farḍ*). So, as for the obligatory nature of Tahajjud, it was abrogated as a duty on the Muslim community at large, by consensus. However, difference did exist about its obligatory nature. Was it also abrogated in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ? Or, did it remain an obligation on him as a matter of special consideration - and in this verse, the expression: نَافِلَةً لَّكَ (*nāfilatal-lak*) means exactly that 'the prayer of Tahajjud is an additional obligation on you.' But, according to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this is not correct for many reasons. Firstly, there is no justification for taking *nafl* as *farḍ*. If it is supposed to be figurative speech, then, there will be no reality against it. Secondly, in authentic Aḥādīth, only five fixed prayers have been mentioned as obligatory (*farḍ*). At the end of another Ḥadīth, it has been said that the fifty prayers made obligatory initially in the nocturnal journey of the Mi'rāj were later reduced in number and set at five. Thus, the number was, though, reduced but the reward promised against these was that of no less than fifty. Then it was said: مَا يَدُلُّ الْقَوْلُ لَدَيَّ (The word [given to My servants] will not be changed with Me - Qāf, 50:29). It means: When the command was given for fifty, the reward shall be given for no less than fifty, though the number to be actually performed was reduced.

The outcome of these narrative reports is no other but that no Ṣalāh - other than the five prayers - is obligatory (*farḍ*) on the Muslim *ummah* at large and on the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Then, there is a reason for it too. Had the word: نَافِلَةً : *nāfilah* been used here in the sense of an 'additional duty,' then, rather than using the word: لَكَ (*lak*: for you) after it, the word used should have been: عَلَيْكَ (*'alaik*: on you) since the latter signifies obligation while the word: لَكَ (*lak*: for you) is used only for approv-

al and permission.

Similarly, this is the position declared to be correct and sound in Tafsīr Maḏharī which says: When the obligatory status of Tahajjud was abrogated in the case of the Muslim *ummah*, it stood abrogated in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well. What remained was *nafl* for everyone. But, this position raises a question: What is the singularity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in it? That it is *nafl* for everyone already stands proved. What, then, would be the outcome of saying: نَافِلَةٌ لَّكَ (an additional prayer for you)? The answer is that, according to clear statements of Aḥādīth, all kinds of voluntary offerings and *nafl 'Ibādāt* made by the Muslim *ummah* expiate their sins and serve as complements to whatever shortcomings remain in the performance of their obligatory prayers. But, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not only that he is infallible (*ma'sūm*) against sins, he is also above from any shortcomings in the observance of the etiquette of Ṣalāh. Therefore, as far as he is concerned, *nafl 'Ibādāt* are nothing but additional. These cannot make amends for any shortcomings. Instead, these are simply a source of increased nearness to Allah. (Qurṭubī, Maḏharī)

### **Is the prayer of Tahajjud Nafl or Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah?**

As for Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah (the emphasized Sunnah), Muslim jurists have a standing rule. Whatever the Holy Prophet ﷺ has done constantly, never leaving it unless under compulsion, is Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah - except that it is proved on the authority of an Islamic legal argument that the particular act was special to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and was not for the Muslim community in general. This rule will obviously require that the prayer of Tahajjud should also be taken as Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah for everyone and not a mere *nafl*. The reason is that the constancy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the matter of this Ṣalāh stands proved as an uninterrupted Sunnah. And there is no proof of its being restricted to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, it should be Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah for the Muslim *ummah* at large as well. This is the position Tafsīr Maḏharī rates as preferable, weightier and worthier. In proof of this being 'emphasized' (*al-mu'akkadah*), it has pointed out to the Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said about a person who used to say his Tahajjud prayer earlier but left it later: 'the Satan has soiled his ear.' Such a drastic admonition and warning does not sound in order against the

abandonment of *nafl* only. This tells us that it is Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah (an emphasized Sunnah).

And as for the respected elders who take the position that Tahajjud is only a *nafl*, they declared this perseverance and constancy to be the hallmark of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, what he said as admonition against the abandonment of Tahajjud by the person who used to do it before was not really said against its abandonment by him as such. Instead, it was said against first getting used to it, then abandoning it. The reason is that a person who gets into the habit of doing a certain *nafl* must continue with it assiduously - and there is a consensus of the Muslim *ummah* on it. If one leaves it after being in the habit of doing it, he will be blameworthy because leaving it without excuse after the habit is the sign of certain evasion and reluctance. However, there is no blame on the person who is just not in the habit of doing it from the very beginning. Allah knows best.

### The number of Raka'āt in the prayer of Tahajjud

In the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as narrated by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, 'the Holy Prophet ﷺ would never say more than eleven *raka'āt*, in Ramaḍān or during months other than it.' Out of these eleven, according to the Ḥanafīyyah, three *raka'āt* used to be that of *witr*, the remaining eight being that of Tahajjud.

And in a narration of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the following words of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها have been reported: 'The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to say thirteen *raka'āt* during the night which includes *witr* and two *raka'āt* of the Sunnah of Fajr as well.' (Maḥzarī) The Sunnah of Fajr has been counted with the nightly prayer because they are performed in almost the same sequence. These reports tell us that the usual habit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was to offer eight *raka'āt* in the prayer of Tahajjud.

But, from a report coming from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها herself, it also stands proved that, on occasions, he has done less than that number - four or six - as being sufficient. When Sayyidnā Masrūq رضى الله عنها asked her about the prayer of Tahajjud, she has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī to have said: 'There used to be seven, nine and eleven *raka'āt* - other than the Sunnah of Fajr' (Maḥzarī from al-Bukhārī). According to the Ḥanafīyyah, if three *raka'āt* are that of *witr*, four out of

seven, six out of nine and eight out of eleven turn out to be the *rak'at* of Tahajjud.

### In what manner was the prayer of Tahajjud offered?

Narrative reports as they generally appear in Aḥādīth prove that the first two *rak'at* in the beginning were light with a brief recitation. Then, in the rest of the *rak'at*, the recitation was long and so were the *rukū'* and *sajdah* - and, at times, this length would become too much and, at others, somewhat less. (This is a summary of the Ḥadīth reports taken from Tafsīr Maḥzarī at this place)

### The Praised Station

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has been promised مقام محمود (Maqām Maḥmūd: The Praised Station) in this verse and this station is, out of all prophets, particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As to its explanation, there are different sayings. But, the most sound of them is what appears in authentic Aḥādīth in the words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. This Station is the station of the Grand Intercession (*al-shafā'ah al-kubrā*). This will come to pass on the plains of Resurrection (*al-Ḥashr*) when all children of 'Ādam will be there requesting every prophet and messenger of Allah to intercede with Him on their behalf. All prophets عليهم السلام will offer their excuse. Only the Holy Prophet ﷺ shall be blessed with the honorable station of interceding on behalf of the entire progeny of 'Ādam. Ḥadīth reports carry lengthy relevant details that appear in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Maḥzarī at this point.

### The intercession made by prophets and the righteous will be accepted

Out of the Islamic sects, the Khawārij and the Mu'tazilah deny the intercession of prophets. They say that a major sin will not be forgiven through intercession by anyone. But, Aḥādīth coming in uninterrupted succession prove that the intercession for sinners will be accepted from prophets عليهم السلام, even from the righteous of the community. There will be many whose sins will be forgiven through intercession.

Based on a report from Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, it appears in Ibn Mājah and al-Baihaqī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the day of Qiyāmah, the blessed prophets will be the first to intercede on behalf of sinners, then the 'Ulamā' and then the Shuhadā'. According to Dailamī

reporting from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the 'Alim will be told that he could intercede on behalf of his disciples, even if their number matches the number of stars.

And Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Hibbān carry a narration of Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضي الله عنه, with its chains ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said: The intercession made by a Shahīd (شهيد) will be accepted in favor of seventy people from his family.

The Musnad of Aḥmad, al-Ṭabarānī and al-Baihaqi authentically report Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah رضي الله عنه narrating that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the intercession of one person from my *ummah* many people, more than the entire number of the people of the tribes of Rabī'ah and Muḍar, will be admitted to Jannah.

### A question and its answer

The question is when the Holy Prophet ﷺ will himself intercede - and no believer will remain in Hell because of it - why and how will the 'Ulamā' and the righteous intercede? The answer appears in Tafsīr Maḥzarī: perhaps, the 'Ulamā' and the righteous of the community will present their intercession in favor of whomsoever they wish before the Holy Prophet ﷺ who will then intercede with Allah Ta'ālā.

### An important note

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: شَفَاعَتِي لِأَهْلِ الْكِبَائِرِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي (My intercession shall be for people who had committed major sins). This seems to tell us that those involved with major sins will be forgiven particularly through the intercession of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Any angel or any individual from the Muslim community will not be able to intercede in the case of those who have committed major sins. Instead of that, the intercession made by the righteous of the Muslim community will be for those who were involved with minor sins.

### The Station of Intercession could be reached through the efficacy of the prayer of Tahajjud

Ḥadrāt Mujaddid Alf Thānī, the famous religious revivalist of the first Islamic millenium in India, said that, in this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was first given the command to make the prayer of Tahajjud, then he was promised the Praised Station, that is, the Station of Grand Intercession. This tells us that the prayer of Tahajjud serves as a special

via media in acquiring the Station of Intercession.

Before we proceed to verse 80, let us recapitulate what was said in the verses previous to it. Mentioned there first were the pains inflicted on the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the conspiracies they kept hatching to hurt and harm him. Along with it, it was also said that these hostile plans made by them will never succeed. In contrast, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was being blessed with the real plan to offset their evil by prompting him to establish the five prayers, and the Tahajjud. Following that, he has been promised the Praised Station, the highest among all prophets - a promise to be fulfilled in the Hereafter. Now, in this verse 80: وَقُلْ رَبِّ اَدْخِلْنِيْ (And say, "O my Lord, make me enter...), the first relief to him against the hurtful and treacherous actions of the disbelievers was given by Allah Ta'ālā within this world in the form of his migration to Madīnah. Then, he was given the good news of the conquest of Makkah in: وَقُلْ حَآءٌ (And say, "Truth has come...81).

It has been reported in al-Jāmi' of Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in Makkah al-Mu'azzamah. Then, he was commanded to migrate to Madīnah. Thereupon, this verse was revealed: وَقُلْ رَبِّ اَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّاَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ (And say, "O my Lord, make me enter a rightful entrance and make me exit a rightful exit - 80). Here, the word: مُدْخَلَ (*mudkhal*) and مُخْرَجَ (*mukhraj*) meaning the place of entry and the place of exit are اسم ظرف (*ism-al-zarf*: the noun of place and time). The addition of the attribute (*na't*) of صِدْقٍ :*ṣidq* (translated as rightful) releases the sense of such entry and exit being totally true to the will and pleasure of Allah and in the best of attending circumstances, because the word: صِدْقٍ (*ṣidq*) is also used in the Arabic language for every such act as is correct and better both outwardly and inwardly. The words: قَدْ مَصِدَّقٌ (Yūnus 10:2), لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ (ash-Shu'arā' 26:84) and مَقْعَدٌ صِدْقٍ (al-Qamar 54:55) have been used in the Holy Qur'ān in that very sense.

'Entrance' means 'Madīnah' and the place of exit denotes 'Makkah.' The sense takes the form of a prayer: O Allah, may my entry into Madīnah turn out to be good and smooth, without having to face anything unpleasant and unwelcome on arrival there. And may my exit from Makkah be good and smooth, without being entangled in love of country and home.' There are other exegetic statements too which explain this verse. But, this particular explanation has been reported from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī



and Qatādah. Ibn Kathīr calls it 'the most sound statement.' Ibn Jarīr too has gone by it. As for the order, it required that the 'exit' should have been mentioned first while the 'entrance,' later. But, the precedence of 'entrance' and the succession of 'exit' is there, perhaps, to indicate that the exit from Makkah had no purpose of its own, in fact, parting from the Baytullah was extremely shocking. But, there was a purpose - to look for peace, for Islam and Muslims - something that could be hoped for through the entry in Madīnah. Therefore, the objective to be achieved was made to come first.

### A prayer for important objectives

At the time of his migration to Madīnah, Allah Ta'ālā asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ to make this *du'ā'* which pleaded with Him that his exit from Makkah and then the arrival in Madīnah should both be good and smooth in all possible ways. It was the outcome of this prayer that, though he was within the striking range of the pursuing disbelievers at the time of Hijrah, yet Allah Ta'ālā shielded him at every step and finally made Madīnah al-Ṭayyibah good and promising for him and for all Muslims, both outwardly and inwardly. Therefore, some 'Ulamā' have said that every Muslim should remember to make this prayer at the beginning of all objectives they wish to pursue and that this prayer is beneficial for all objectives and purposes. The sentence which complements this very prayer appears next: *وَأَجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا* : "and grant me from Your Own a power favoured (by You)." Qatādah, the great *tabi'ī* says: the Holy Prophet ﷺ knew that fulfilling his functional duties as a prophet and working while besieged by enemies were challenges he could not handle personally. Therefore, He prayed to Allah Ta'ālā for help and the power to subdue. The prayer was answered and everyone saw its effects.

Verse 81: *وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ* (And say, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished") was revealed after Hijrah about the conquest of Makkah. Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ says that on the day Makkah was conquered, the Holy Prophet ﷺ entered Makkah. At that time, there were three hundred and sixty idols standing around the Baytullah. Some 'Ulamā' report a reason for this particular number. They say that the Mushriks of Makkah had a separate idol for each day of the year that they used to worship on the given day. (Qurṭubī) When the Holy Prophet ﷺ

reached there, this was the verse he had on his blessed lips: **جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ** (Truth has come and falsehood has vanished) while he went round striking at each single idol on the chest with his stick. (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

It appears in some Ḥadīth narratives that the end of this stick had a pewter or iron ferrule mounted on it. So, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ would hit an idol on the chest, it would fall back. In the end, when all idols fell down, he gave orders that they be demolished. (Qurtubī with reference to Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ and al-Qushairī)

### **It is necessary to erase customs and symbols of polytheism, disbelief and falsehood**

Imām al-Qurtubī said that this verse proves that it is *wājib* (necessary, obligatory) to erase the idols of Mushriks and all other polytheistic symbols and signs - and all such false instruments that are used in the way of sin and disobedience as well. They too come under the purview of the same injunction. Ibn al-Mundhir said that pictures and sculpted figures made in wood or metal etc. also come under the injunction governing idols. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had torn the curtain having pictures made on it in lines and colors. This, incidentally, tells us about the general injunctions covering common pictures. According to Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, when Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام will come towards the later times, he will undo the cross and eliminate the swine. These things prove that it is necessary to demolish and eliminate the instruments of *shirk*, *kufr* and *bāṭil*.

We can now move to the last verse (82) cited above: **وَنَزَّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ** (And We reveal the Qur'ān which is a cure). That the Holy Qur'ān cures hearts and delivers people from *shirk* and *kufr*, low morals and spiritual ailments is no secret. The entire Muslim *ummah* agrees with it. And according to some 'Ulamā', the way the Qur'ān is a cure for spiritual ailments, it is also a cure for physical diseases. The sense is that reciting the verses of the Qur'ān and blowing the breath on the body of the sick person or to write its words on an amulet and putting it around the neck is also expected to be a cure for physical diseases. Ḥadīth narratives bear testimony to it. The Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه can be seen in all books of Aḥādīth. It says that a party of the noble Companions was in travel. In a village on their way, a scorpion had bitten the chief. The village people asked the Companions if they could suggest

some treatment for it. They recited the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah seven times, blew their breath on him and the ailing patient stood cured. Later, when this incident was mentioned before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he declared this action of the Companions to be permissible.

Similarly, there are several other Ḥadīth reports which prove that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has done it himself. After having recited the last two verses of the Qur'ān, he would blow his breath on the sick person. It is also proved that the Ṣaḥābah and the Ṭabī'īn used to treat sick people with the recital of the last two verses of the Qur'ān as well as with the recital of other verses from it. That it was written and placed around the neck as an amulet also stands proved. Al-Qurṭubī has given details about it under his commentary on this verse.

The last sentence of the verse: وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا (And it adds nothing to the unjust but loss - 82) tells us that the Holy Qur'ān - when recited with faith and reverence - is certainly a cure. It is open. It is proven. Conversely, any denial of the Qur'ān, or irreverence to it, could also become a source of loss and misfortunes.

### Verses 83 - 84

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَى بِجَانِبِهِ ؕ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ  
يُتُوسًّا ﴿٨٣﴾ قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلِهِ ؕ فَرُبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ  
أَهْدَى سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٤﴾

And when We bestow Our favor upon man, he avoids (to recognize it) and keeps himself far aside (from obedience), and when some evil touches him, he is in total despair. [83]

Say, "Everyone acts in his own style. For, your Lord knows best which one is better guided in his way." [84]

### Commentary

Regarding the explanation of the word: شَاكِلَه (shākilah) in verse 84: كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلِهِ (Everyone acts in his own style), several interpretations have been reported from authorities among the early righteous elders, such as, disposition, habit, instinct, intention, way or manner. In sum,

all these turn into a second nature in terms of the circumstances, habits and customs everyone lives with. Thus, what one does remains subservient to it. (Qurṭubī) In this verse, human beings have been warned that they must abstain from bad surroundings, bad company and bad habits and take to the company of good people and inculcate good habits (al-Jaṣṣāṣ). The reason, as stated earlier, is that one's response pattern built up under the influence of surrounding, company and custom makes one do what it dictates. Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ has also given another meaning of 'shākilah' at this place, that of 'like.' Given this meaning, the sense of the verse would be that everyone feels comfortable with a person who is compatible with one's temperament. A good man finds another good man familiar while a wicked man feels comfortable with another wicked man whose style he follows without any qualms of conscience. An example of this behavior pattern appears in what Allah says in the Qur'an: الْحَيَاتُ الطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ (Good women are for good men - 24:26) and الْحَيَاتُ الْفَاحِشَاتُ لِلْفَاحِشِينَ (Evil women are for evil men - 24:26). It means that everyone strikes familiarity with a man or woman according to one's own temperament. In short, this too is a warning against falling into bad company and bad habits. One should really make an effort to abstain from these.

### Verses 85 - 89

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ ۖ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٥﴾ وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتُمْ لَنَدْهَبَنَّ بِالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ بِهِ عَلَيْنَا وَكِيلًا ﴿٨٦﴾ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۖ إِنَّ فَضْلَهُ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ كَبِيرًا ﴿٨٧﴾ قُلْ لَنْ أَجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا ﴿٨٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ۚ فَأَبَىٰ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِلَّا كُفُورًا ﴿٨٩﴾

And they ask you about the soul. Say, "The soul is something from the command of my Lord, and you are not given but a little from the knowledge." [85]

And if We so will, We will surely take away what We have revealed to you, then you shall find no one to rely upon against Us in this matter. [86] But it is a mercy from your Lord. Great is indeed His favor upon you. [87]

Say, "If all the humans and *jinn*s join together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they shall not (be able to) come up with its like, even though they back up one another. [88]

And surely We have explained for the people in this Qur'ān every subject in various ways. Still most of the people refused to do anything but reject. [89]

### Commentary

The first verse (85) appearing above carries a question posed by disbelievers about Rūḥ (soul, spirit) along with its answer that came from Allah Ta'ālā. The word: **الرُّوحُ** (*al-rūḥ*) is used in the Arabic language and idiom, and in the Holy Qur'ān as well, to convey several meanings. The well-recognized meaning taken from this word is common knowledge, that is, the soul on which depends life. In the Holy Qur'ān, this word has also been used for the archangel, Jibra'īl al-Amin (Gabriel, the Trustworthy): **نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ** (The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down upon your heart - ash-Shu'arā' 26:193,194). It has also been used for Sayyidnā 'Isā **الطَّيِّبُ** (4:171), and Waḥy (revelation - 40:15), and the Qur'ān too: **أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا** (and We have revealed to you a spirit of Our command - 42:52).

### What does 'Rūḥ' signify?

Therefore, the first thing to be determined here is the intent of the questioners as to which meaning they had in mind when they had asked the question about the Rūḥ. Some respected early commentators have, in view of the context, declared this question as related to revelation and Qur'ān, or to angel Jibra'īl who brought it. The apparent reason is that the Qur'ān was mentioned earlier in: **وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ** (And We reveal the Qur'ān - 82) and it is again the Qur'ān that finds mention in the verses after that. Given this congruity, they found it appropriate to take 'Rūḥ' in this question too as signifying nothing but Waḥy and Qur'ān, or Jibra'īl. In that case, the question would be about how the Waḥy or revelation came to him and who brought it. In response to the question, the Holy Qur'ān considered it sufficient to say that the revelation was from

the command of Allah. It elected to be silent about its details and modalities that the questioners were seeking.

But, the background of the revelation of this verse given in authentic Aḥādīth ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is just about very clear in respect of the nature of the question. Those asking the question had asked about the living Rūḥ and the underlying purpose was to find out the reality of Rūḥ. What is it? How does it come in and go out of the human body? How does it make man and animal come alive? According to the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه narrates:

'Once I was walking with the Holy Prophet ﷺ through an unpopulated part of Madīnah. He had a stick from the branch of a date palm in his blessed hand. When he passed by some Jews, they were talking among themselves: Muhammad ﷺ is coming. Ask him about the Rūḥ. Others asked them not to do that. But, those bent on asking went ahead and asked the question. After having heard the question, the Holy Prophet ﷺ reclined on his stick and stood silent which gave me the inkling that the revelation was about to come on him. After a little while, when the revelation had come to him, he recited the verse: وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ (And they ask you about the Rūḥ).'

At this point, it is understandable that it was a terminology of the Qur'ān when it called the Qur'ān, or Waḥy (revelation) as Rūḥ. That the question asked by these people was based on it is too far out. Of course, the matter of the living Rūḥ, human or animal, is such as would naturally emerge in everyone's mind. Therefore, the majority of commentators - Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Jarīr, al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, 'Alūsī - confirm the view that the question related to the reality of the living Rūḥ. As for the continuity of references to the Qur'ān in the context and that the question-answer interlude about Rūḥ coming in between would be incoherent, its answer is clear. Previous verses have mentioned hostile questions asked by the disbelievers and Mushriks. Their objective thereby was to test the Holy Prophet ﷺ concerning his claim to be a messenger of Allah. This question too is a link of the same chain. Therefore, it is not incoherent. There is yet another authentic Ḥadīth reported about the background of the revelation of this verse particularly. The position being explained here has been covered there

more explicitly, that is, the purpose of the questioner was to test the authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a Messenger.

Accordingly, a report of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad says that the Quraysh of Makkah who kept addressing all sorts of questions to the Holy Prophet ﷺ hit upon the idea that the Jews were learned and knew about past scriptures. Why not ask them about what to ask the Holy Prophet ﷺ and test him thereby? Therefore, they sent their men to the Jews seeking their guidance in this matter. They told them to ask about the Rūḥ. (Ibn Kathīr) Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has also been reported to have said in his explanation of this verse that the Jews had also said while asking this question - 'you tell us how does punishment affect the Rūḥ.' By that time, nothing had been revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ about it. Therefore, he did not answer the question instantly at that time. Then, came angel Jibrā'īl with the verse: قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي (Say, "the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord.") (Abridged from Ibn Kathīr)

### **The incident of the question: Did it happen in Makkah or Madīnah?**

Before we resolve this aspect of the question, we have to consider the two Ḥadīth reports relating to the background of the revelation of this verse, that of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, referred to above. Out of the two, according to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ, this incident about the question came to pass in Madīnah - and that is the reason why some commentators have declared this verse to be Madani, though a major portion of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (al-Isrā') is Makki. As for the report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, it places the incident at Makkah. In accordance with that, this verse too remains Makki like the whole Sūrah. Therefore, Ibn Kathīr has declared this very probability to be weightier and more acceptable. And as for the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ, he responds by saying that it is possible that this verse was revealed in Madīnah a second time - as a repeated revelation of many verses of the Qur'ān is an accepted fact in the sight of all 'Ulamā'. And Tafsīr Maḥzarī, by declaring the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd as weightier and more acceptable, has determined the incident to be that of Madīnah and the verse to be Madani. It gives two reasons for it. Firstly, this report appears in the two Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhari and Muslim and its

authority is stronger as compared to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. Secondly, in this report, Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd is a part of the incident. He is narrating an event that was his own. This makes it contrary to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās where, it is obvious, he would have heard it as told by someone (because he was too young at that time to witness the occurrence).

### **The answer to the question asked**

The Holy Qur'ān said: **قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي** (Say, "the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord."). While explaining the answer, statements and interpretations given by commentators differ. The closest and the clearest of these is what Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānipatī has preferred in his Tafsīr Maḥzarī. He says: Only what was necessary and what common people would understand has been told - and the full reality of Rūḥ, that the question sought, was not unfolded because it was beyond the comprehension of common people and, for that matter, nothing they needed hinged on understanding it. Here, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked to respond by saying that 'the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord.' In other words, it is not like the usual created that come into existence through the dispersal of matter and procreation. In fact, it is something created directly through the command (**كُنْ**: *kun*: be) of Allah Ta'ālā. At least, this much of the answer makes it clear that Rūḥ cannot be taken on the analogy of common matter - which removes all those doubts that emerge as a result of trying to understand Rūḥ through the prism of materialistic inquiry. The hard truth is that this much knowledge of Rūḥ is sufficient for man. No business, religious or worldly, depends on knowing more than that. Therefore, taking that part of the question as redundant and unnecessary, it was not answered - specially when understanding its reality is something not easy even for the wisest of the wise, not to say much about the common people.

### **Answering every question is not necessary unless religiously advisable**

Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has deduced from this answer the ruling that it is not necessary for the Muftī and 'Ālim to answer every question and every aspect from it as posed by the questioner. Instead of doing that, the answer should be given with religious advisability kept in sight. Any answer that is above the comprehension of the addressee, or



should there be the danger of his or her falling into misunderstanding, then, such an answer should not be given. Similarly, not to be answered are questions that are unnecessary (لا يعنى : *lā ya'nī*). Yes, should there be a person who faces a situation in which he must act one way or the other and who is no 'Ālim, then, it is necessary for the Muftī and 'Ālim to give an answer in the light of his knowledge. (Jaṣṣāṣ) Imām al-Bukhārī has devoted a chapter heading in Kitāb al-'Ilm to highlight this point. He has said that a question the answer to which is likely to cause misunderstanding should not be answered.

### **Whether or not it is possible for anyone to have the knowledge of the reality of Rūḥ**

The Holy Qur'ān has given an answer to this question in accordance with the need and comprehension of the addressee. It has not elected to unfold the reality of Rūḥ. But, it does not necessarily imply that no human being can simply understand the reality of Rūḥ and that the Holy Prophet ﷺ also did not know its reality. The truth of the matter is that this verse neither negates nor confirms it. If a prophet or messenger were to come to know its reality through Waḥy (revelation), or a Waliyy (man of Allah) through Kashf (illumination) and Ilhām (inspiration), then, it is not contrary to this verse. In fact, even if this matter is debated and investigated in terms of reason and philosophy, it would certainly be called useless and unnecessary, but it cannot be called impermissible. Therefore, many learned scholars from the early and later period of Islam have written standard books about Rūḥ. In our period, my venerated teacher, Shaykh al-Islam, Shabbīr Aḥmad Usmānī has presented this issue admirably in a small tract. Here, he has explained its reality to the measure it is possible for a common person to understand and an educated one to find sufficient enough to avoid doubts and difficulties.

### **An important note**

At this juncture, Imām al-Baghawī has carried a detail report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ as follows: This verse was revealed in Makkah al-Mukarramah. It happened at a time when the Quraysh chiefs of Makkah got together and talked about the problem that Muḥammad ﷺ was born amongst us and grew up into a young man. No one ever doubted his trustworthiness, honesty and truthfulness, and he was never accused by anyone of having told a lie. Yet, despite all that,

we just do not understand the claim of being a prophet he was now making. Therefore, let us do something about it, like sending our delegation to the Jewish scholars of Madīnah and get a learned opinion about him from them. So, a delegation from the Quraysh met the Jewish scholars in Madīnah. They advised: 'we tell you three things. Ask him about these three. If he answers all three, he is no prophet. Similarly, if he does not answer any of the three, he is still no prophet. And if he answers two, not answering the third, be certain that he is the prophet.'\* They proposed three questions: (1) Ask him about those in the past who had sought refuge in a cave to stay safe from *shirk* - because, their account is unique. (2) Ask him about the person who had traveled through the East and West of the Earth and what had happened to him. (3) Ask him about the Rūḥ (soul, spirit).

The delegation returned and posed those three questions before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He said, 'I shall give you the answer to these tomorrow'- but, he did not say, "*Insha'Allah*" with it. The outcome was that the channel of Waḥy (revelation) remained discontinued for a few days. There are various reports that put the number of days from twelve, fifteen to forty during which it stood stopped. The Quraysh of Makkah had their opportunity to hurl taunts - 'we were promised an answer tomorrow, now so many days have passed and we have no answer!' This caused the Holy Prophet ﷺ too to become anxious. Then came angel Jibrā'īl with the verse: لَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَيْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَلِكْ غَدًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ (And never say about anything: "I will do that tomorrow," without [saying]: "*Insha'Allāh*": [If Allah wills]. - al-Kahf, 18: 23,24) and, after that, he recited the verse about the Rūḥ mentioned above. Then came the revelation of the verses relating to the people of Kahf, and the event of Dhul-Qarnain who had traveled from the East to the West which is to appear in Sūrah al-Kahf. A detailed answer has been given there by narrating the story of the people of Kahf and Dhul-Qarnain while the question concerned with the reality of the Rūḥ was not answered (which made the sign of the veracity of prophecy given by the Jews manifest). Tirmidhī has also described this event briefly. (Maḡharī)

Investigative observations on the reality of Rūḥ (soul, spirit) and

\*. This detail is in accordance with Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl, p. 134, v. 4 - Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī.

Nafs (self) have appeared earlier in this volume under verse 29 of Sūrah al-Hijr: نَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي (I have blown into him of my spirit - 15:29). Presented with reference to Tafsīr Maḥzarī, it makes the kinds of Rūḥ along with the reality of each sufficiently clear.

We can now move to verse 86: وَلَئِنْ شِئْنَا لَنَذْهَبَنَّ (And if We so will, We will surely take away...). It will be recollected that, in the previous verse (85), by giving an answer to the question about Rūḥ as true to the measure of its necessity, the underlying effort to find out the reality of the Rūḥ was blocked and it was declared that man's knowledge, no matter how much, still remains relatively insignificant in terms of the great span of the ultimate reality of things. Therefore, getting entangled with unnecessary debates and investigations is a waste of precious time. The present verse: وَلَئِنْ شِئْنَا (And if We so will) indicates that the sum total of whatever knowledge human beings have been given, even that is no private property of theirs. Allah Ta'ālā can, if He so wills, take away that too. Therefore, they should be grateful to Allah for whatever of knowledge they have and stay away from wasting time in redundant and unnecessary investigations - specially when pure investigation is just not the objective, instead, testing others or belittling them is. If one did that, it is not out of the realm of possibility that this crookedness may result in all that one has in the name of knowledge taken away in toto. The address in this verse is, though, to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but the purpose is to really make his followers listen and get the message - when even the knowledge of the Rasūl of Allah is not within his exclusive power and control, not much can be said about others!

The subject in verse 88: قُلْ لِّينِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ (If all humans and *jinn*s join together...) appears in some other verses of the Holy Qur'ān as well. Challenging the humankind, it has been said there: If you do not take the Qur'ān to be the word of Allah, rather take it to be a word of man, then, you too are human, why would you not come up with its like? Along with that challenge, it was also said in this verse: Not the human-kind alone, you are welcome to join up with *jinn*s, but you, all combined together, will still be unable to come out with one Sūrah - even one verse - like that of the Qur'ān.

The repetition of this subject at this place may possibly be to show the futility of what the deniers of the message were trying to do. Here

they were trying to test the veracity of the mission of a prophet of Allah by asking all sorts of questions, the one about the Rūḥ being one of them. Being an exercise in futility, why would they go about digging into unnecessary issues only to determine whether or not the prophet sent to them was true? Why they would not look into the Qur'ān as it is? It leaves no room for doubt in the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as prophet and messenger of Allah. The reason is simple. When the humans and *jinn*s of the whole world are incapable of producing the least like of it, what doubt could there be in that it is but the Divine Word. And once it is proved so manifestly that the Holy Qur'ān is Divine Word, hardly any doubt remains in that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a true prophet and messenger of Allah.

The last verse: وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا (And surely We have explained - 89) tells us that the Holy Qur'ān stands out as a miracle so clear that it leaves no room for any question and doubt. Still, what is happening is that people do not thank Allah for His blessings, do not even recognize the real worth of the blessing of the Qur'ān and keep wandering around in error.

### Verses 90 - 95

وَقَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّى تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ يَنْبُوعًا ﴿٩٠﴾ أَوْ تَكُونُ  
لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّحِيلٍ وَعِنَبٍ فَتُفَجَّرَ الْأَنْهَارُ خِلَالَهَا تَفْجِيرًا ﴿٩١﴾  
أَوْ تُسْقِطَ السَّمَاءَ كَمَا زَعَمْتَ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا أَوْ تَأْتِيَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ  
قَبِيلًا ﴿٩٢﴾ أَوْ يَكُونُ لَكَ يَتٌ مِّنْ زُخْرَفٍ أَوْ تَرْفَى فِي السَّمَاءِ ۖ وَلَنْ  
نُّؤْمِنَ لِرِيقِكَ حَتَّى تُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتَابًا نَّقْرُؤُهُ ۖ قُلْ سُبْحَنَ رَبِّي هَلْ  
كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا ﴿٩٣﴾ وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ  
الْهُدَى إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ بَشَرًا رَسُولًا ﴿٩٤﴾ قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ فِي  
الْأَرْضِ مَلَائِكَةٌ يَّمْشُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَلَكًا  
رَّسُولًا ﴿٩٥﴾

And they said, "We shall never believe in you unless you

make a spring gush forth for us from the earth. [90] Or you have a garden of date-palms and grapes, then you bring forth rivers from their midst in abundance. [91] Or you cause the sky to fall upon us in pieces, as you claimed, or you bring Allah and angels before us face to face. [92] Or you have a house made of gold; or you ascend to the sky, and we will not believe in your ascension unless you send down to us a book we may read. Say, "I proclaim the Purity of my Lord. I am nothing but human, a messenger." [93]

And nothing prevented people from believing, when guidance came to them, except that they said, "Has Allah sent a man as a messenger?" [94]

Say, "Were there angels (living) on the earth, walking about in peace, We would have certainly sent down an angel from the heavens as a messenger." [95]

## Commentary

### A prophetic answer to hostile questions sounding absurd

The questions asked and the demands made in these verses from the Holy Prophet ﷺ were virtually conditions on the fulfillment of which his antagonists were supposed to believe. These conditions are such that anyone who hears them would find them nothing but some sort of weird mockery and certainly a very absurd excuse for not believing. While having to respond to such questions, one becomes naturally angry and retorts in the same manner. But, the answer that Allah Ta'ālā taught His prophet ﷺ to give against their impertinent questions reported in this verse is something significant for everyone. Particularly so, for the leaders and reformers of the Muslim community who would do well to always remember it making it a regular feature of their work among people. Is it not that, in answer to all that, nothing was said about their lack of sense, nor mention was made of their hostile mischief, nor there was any verbal duel fought against them? Instead, the truth of the matter was made clear to them in very simple words. In effect, they were told: Perhaps, you think that a person who comes as a messenger of Allah should also be the possessor of all Divine powers and should be able to control everything. This is a mistaken notion. The duty of a messenger of Allah is only to convey the Divine message. It is a different matter that Allah would also send many miracles to prove the veracity of the mission of His apostles, prophets and messengers. But, that takes

place exclusively with the power and under the control of Allah Ta'ālā. A *rasūl* (messenger) is not given Divine powers. He is a human being and is never outside the framework of human power - except that Allah Ta'ālā alone were to manifest His great subduing power to help him.

**Only a human being can be a messenger of Allah: Angels cannot be sent as messengers to human beings**

Common disbelievers and polytheists thought that '*bashar*,' that is, a man, could not be the messenger of Allah because he is someone accustomed to all human compulsions like them. When so, what edge did he have over them to make them call him the messenger of Allah and take him as their leader claiming that they follow him? This assumption of theirs has been answered in the Holy Qur'ān, at several places in various ways. The outcome of the answer given here in this verse: مَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ (And nothing prevented people - 94) is that a messenger of Allah sent to a set of people has to be from their genus or race. If these people are human, the messenger should be human because mutual congruity does not exist between one genus and the other - and without congruity, guidance and grooming bring no benefit. Had some angel been sent to men as their messenger, he would have known no hunger, or thirst, or sexual desires, nor would he have felt the effect of chill and heat, nor fatigue after hard work. He would have, then, expected human beings to act like him without having ever realized their weaknesses and limitations. Similarly, when human beings knew that he was an angel, after all, they would have come to the conclusion that they just did not have the ability to do what he did. Who would have, then, followed him? Following is the fruit of correction, reform and right guidance. This benefit can be hoped for only when the messenger of Allah is from the genus of men. He should be an embodiment of human emotions and physical desires while, at the same time, he should also have an angelic majesty that could serve as a liaison - intermediary communicator - between human beings and angels, receiving revelation from angels bringing it and communicating it to his fellow human beings.

This submission also removes the doubt that arises by thinking: when human beings cannot derive benefit from the angel, how would a messenger - despite being human - derive the benefit of revelation from them?

As for the doubt - when the compatibility of genus is a condition between a messenger and his people, how was the Holy Prophet ﷺ made a messenger of the *jinn*s for they are not from the same genus as men? - it can be answered by saying that the messenger is not simply a human being, instead, he also has an angelic majesty about him because of which *jinn*s too could also be congruous to him.

In the last verse (95), it was said that they, despite being human, cannot demand that their messenger should be an angel. This demand was unreasonable. Yes, if angels had been living on the Earth and there was the need to send a messenger to them, then, indeed, an angel would have been sent as a messenger. It will be noted that the attribute of angels living on the Earth has been described here in the words: *يَمْشُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ* (walking about in peace). This tells us that the need to send an angel deputed as a messenger to other angels would have come up only at a time when the angels of the Earth could not themselves go to the heavens rather remained living on the Earth alone. Otherwise, had they themselves possessed the power to go to the heavens, there would have remained just no need to send a messenger to the Earth.

### Verses 96 - 100

قُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٩٦﴾ وَمَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِهِ ۚ وَنَحْشُرُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ عُمِيَآ وَبِكُمَا وَصَمًا ۖ مَاؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ كُلَّمَا خَبَتْ زِدْنَاهُمْ سَعِيرًا ﴿٩٧﴾ ذَلِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَقَالُوا إِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرَفَاتًا إِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا ﴿٩٨﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ قَادِرٌ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَهُمْ أَجَلًا لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۖ فَآبَى الظَّالِمُونَ إِلَّا كُفُورًا ﴿٩٩﴾ قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ تَمْلِكُونَ خَزَائِنَ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّي إِذًا لَّأَمْسَكْتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الْإِنْفَاقِ ۖ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ قَتُورًا ﴿١٠٠﴾ ع

Say, "Allah is sufficient as witness between me and you. Surely, about His servants, He is All-Aware, All-Watchful." [96]

And the one whom Allah guides is the guided one. And whom He lets go astray, you will never find for them any helpers other than Him. And We shall gather them on the Day of Judgment their faces down - blind, dumb and deaf. Their abode is the Fire. Whenever it calms down, We increase the flames for them. [97]

That is their punishment, because they rejected Our signs and said, "What! Once we are reduced to bones and dust, is it, then, that we shall be raised, created anew?" [98]

Have they not seen that Allah who has created the heavens and the earth has the power to create them as they were? And (for this) He has appointed a time in which there is no doubt. Still, the wrongdoers refused to do anything but reject. [99]

Say, "If you were to own the treasures of my Lord's blessing, even then you would certainly hold them back, lest it should be spent. And man is so niggardly. [100]

## Commentary

The truth of the matter about what has been said in the last verse (100) is that the treasures of the mercy of Allah are limit-less and end-less. They are never going to end, but man is by nature narrow-minded, short on courage. When it comes to giving, he is not motivated enough to share what he has with others.

Commentators generally take the expression 'the treasures of the Lord's blessing or mercy' to mean the treasures of wealth. This has its link with previous verses (90,91) where the disbelievers of Makkah had demanded that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should - if he was really a prophet in truth - make rivers flow in the barren desert of Makkah and transform it into lush green farms, like the land of Syria. The answer to this was given right there (93), saying in effect: This is as if you have taken me to be nothing short of God whose authority you want me to exercise. As for me, I am only a messenger of Allah, not Allah. I cannot do what I will. If we see this verse in this context, it would mean: If you are asking me to turn this desert land of Makkah into a green land to test my verac-



ity as prophet and messenger, then, the miracle of the eloquence of the Qur'an is sufficient to prove that. There is no need for any other demands. And if this is to meet the needs of your country and people, remember that, even if you are given everything you demand for the land of Makkah, and all sorts of treasures with it, it would not result in the prosperity of the masses of your country. In fact, human nature will take its course and whoever gets hold of these treasures will sit on them like legendary serpents. Tell them to spend it on the people and you will see them all consumed by the fear that it will go out of their hands. In a situation like this, if a few rich men of Makkah get to be richer and opulent, what are the masses of people going to get out of it? Most commentators have declared this to be the sense of the verse.

My master and mentor, Ḥaḍrat Thānavī, in his Bayān al-Qur'an, has interpreted 'my Lord's mercy' as the station of prophet-hood and messenger-ship, and 'the treasures of mercy' as the varied perfection of prophet-hood. Given this Tafsīr, this verse will be linked with previous verses by saying: The outcome of all those absurd demands you are making against my status as a prophet and messenger of Allah is that you just do not want to believe in it. Do you, then, want that the function of prophet-hood should be entrusted in your hands, so that you can make anyone a prophet at your sweet will? If such a wish were to be granted, the consequence would be that you would never give prophet-hood or messenger-ship to anyone, sitting over it like misers. After having given this explanation, he has added that this Tafsīr is something that comes as one of the many divine gifts. It fits the occasion. Interpreting prophet-hood in this setting with mercy would be similar to its interpretation in the verse of Sūrah az-Zukhruf. It was said: أَهْمُ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَةً رَبِّكَ (Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? - 43:32). Here, 'rahmah' (mercy) means nothing but 'nubuwwah' (prophet-hood) - and there is a consensus on it. Allah knows best.

### Verses 101 - 109

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى تِسْعَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ فَمَسَّاهُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ إِسْرَءِيلَ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ  
فَقَالَ لَهُ فِرْعَوْنُ إِنِّي لَأَظُنُّكَ يُمُوسَىٰ مَسْحُورًا ﴿١٠١﴾ قَالَ لَقَدْ

عَلِمْتَ مَا أَنْزَلَ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ بِصَاطِرٍ وَإِنِّي  
لَأَظُنُّكَ يُفْرِعُونَ مَثْبُورًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ فَأَرَادَ أَنْ يَسْتَفِزَّهُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُ  
وَمَنْ مَعَهُ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَقُلْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ لِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ اسْكُنُوا  
الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ جِئْنَا بِكُمْ لَفِيفًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَبِالْحَقِّ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ  
وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَلَ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَقُرْآنًا فَرَقْنَاهُ  
لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْثٍ وَنَزَلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ قُلْ آمِنُوا بِهِ أَوْ لَا  
تُؤْمِنُوا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ إِذَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّونَ  
لِلْأَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ سُبْحَنَ رَبِّنَا إِنْ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا  
لَمَفْعُولًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَيَخِرُّونَ لِلْأَذْقَانِ يَكُونُونَ خُشُوعًا

﴿١٠٩﴾ السجدة

And surely we gave Mūsā nine clear signs. So, ask the children of Isrā'īl, when he came to them, the Pharaoh said to him, "I am afraid, O Mūsā, you are under the spell of magic." [101] He said, "You know well that these (signs) are sent down by none but by the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-openers. And, I am afraid O Pharaoh, you are going to be destroyed." [102]

Then he (the Pharaoh) tried to harass him out of the land, so We drowned him and those with him altogether, [103] and thereafter We said to the children of Isrā'īl, "Live in the land. So, when the appointed time of the Hereafter will come, We shall bring you all joined together." [104]

And with truth We have sent it down and with truth it descended. And We did not send you but as a bearer of good tidings and as a warner. [105]

And We have divided the Qur'ān in portions, so that you may recite it to the people gradually, and We have revealed it little by little. [106]

Say, "Believe it or do not believe it; when it is recited to those who were given knowledge before it, they fall down on their faces in prostration [107] and say, "Pure is

**our Lord. Certainly, the word of our Lord is sure to be done."** [108] **And they fall down on their faces weeping and it increases them in the humbleness of heart.** [109]

### Commentary

The first verse (101): وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى تِسْعَ آيَاتٍ mentions the bestowal of nine clear signs on Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. The word: آية ('āyah) carries the meaning of miracle or sign as well as that of the آيت: āyāt or verses of the Qur'ān, that is, the divine injunctions. At this place, the probability of both meanings exists. Therefore, a number of commentators have taken the word 'āyāt' to mean miracles - and the number nine does not make it necessary that they will not be more than nine - but, at this place, the figure 'nine' has been mentioned on the basis of some particular importance it has. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has enumerated these miracles as follows:

1. The staff of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which turned into a huge snake.
2. The hand that emitted light when placed under and taken out of the armpit.
3. The removal of stammering from his tongue.
4. The splitting of the water barrier in two sections to give safe passage to the Banī Isrā'īl to cross it.
5. The sending of the punishment through locusts in unusual circumstances.
6. The sending of the storm.
7. The clothes on their bodies were infested with countless lice they had no escape from.
8. The punishment of frogs was released on them when frogs would appear in everything they ate or drank.
9. The punishment of blood was sent that filled every utensil and mingled with whatever they ate or drank.

And a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth tells us that the word 'āyāt' used here means divine injunctions. This Ḥadīth has been reported in Abū Dāwūd, an-Nasā'ī, Tirmidhī and Ibn Majah on the authority of Sayyidnā Safwān

ibn al-'Aththāl ؓ. He says that a Jew asked one of his friends to take him to 'that' prophet. The friend said, 'do not call him a prophet. If he finds out that we too call him a prophet, he will have four eyes on him (that is, he will have an opportunity to wallow in his pride and glee).' Then they came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked him as to what were the nine clear signs given to Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ. He said:

1. Do not ascribe any partners to Allah.
2. Do not steal.
3. Do not fornicate.
4. Do not unjustly take the life of the one whose killing has been forbidden by Allah.
5. Do not falsely impute anyone innocent with charges liable to the sentence of death or any other punishment.
6. Do not practice magic.
7. Do not devour interest.
8. Do not level a false accusation of fornication on a chaste woman.
9. Do not desert the battlefield in Jihād for fear of being killed.

And he also said, 'O Jews, it has also been specially enjoined on you that you shall not contravene the particular injunctions of the observance of the day of Sabbath (Saturday) given to you.'

Hearing what the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, they both kissed his hands and feet and declared, 'We bear witness that you are the prophet of Allah.' He said, 'What is it, then, that stops you from following me?' They said that Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ had prayed to his Lord for prophets to always keep appearing from among his progeny - 'and we are scared that the Jews will kill us if we started following you.'

Since this explanation of the verse stands proved on the authority of Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, therefore, this is what many commentators have preferred to go by.

About the last sentence: يَكُونُ وَيَرْيَدُهُمْ خُشُوعًا (And they fall down on their faces weeping and it increases them in the humbleness of heart -109), it

appears in Tafsīr Maḏharī that being in tears while reciting the Qur'ān stands as a highly recommended and reward worthy act (*mustaḥabb*). Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'a person who wept in fear of Allah shall not go to Hell until milk is returned to the udder after having been milked. (It means, as it is not possible to put milk once milked back into the udder, very similarly, it is also not possible that a person who weeps in fear of Allah were to go to Hell). And says another report, 'Allah Ta'ālā has forbidden the fire of Hell on two eyes - the eye that weeps in fear of Allah, and the eye that stays awake at nights guarding the Islamic frontiers. (Baihaqī, and Ḥakīm). And Sayyidnā Naḏr ibn Sa'd رضي الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'a people, among whom there is someone who weeps in fear of Allah, will be delivered from the fire of Hell because of him.' (Rūḥ al- Ma'ānī from Tirmidhī)

The reason for the big trouble Muslims are in today is no other but that there are very few left among them who would weep fearing Allah. After reporting the Aḥādīth showing the merits of weeping in fear of Allah at this point, the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says: وَيَنْبَغِي أَنْ يَكُونَ ذَلِكَ حَالُ الْعُلَمَاءِ (And that is the state the 'Ulamā' should be in) - because, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and others have quoted the following saying of 'Abd al-A'lā Taimī:

'A person who has received the kind of knowledge that does not make him cry [because of having realized the reality of things] should be enough to make you understand that he has not been given the knowledge that brings benefits.'

### Verses 110 - 111

قُلِ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوِ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيُّمَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۖ  
وَلَا تَجْهَرُ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتُ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١١٠﴾  
وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ  
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلِيٌّ مِنَ الذَّلِيلِ وَكَبِّرُهُ تَكْبِيرًا ﴿١١١﴾ ع

Say, "Call (Him by the name of) Allah or Ar-Raḥmān, in whichever way you call, His are the best names." And do

**not be (too) loud in your Ṣalāh nor be (too) low in it, and seek a way in between. [110]**

**And say, "Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone (needed) to protect Him because of (any) weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation. [111]**

### Commentary

These are the last verses of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (Al-'Isrā'). The Sūrah began with a declaration of the purity and oneness of Allah Ta'ālā, and this is how it is being concluded. The revelation of these verses was based on some events. The first one came to pass on a certain day when the Holy Prophet ﷺ, during his supplication, said 'Yā Allah' and 'Yā Raḥmān.' The Mushriks thought that he was calling two Gods. They said, 'he forbids us to call anyone else other than the One while he himself calls two deities.' The answer to this comment was given in the first part of the verse by saying that the most exalted Allah does not have a mere two names. He has many more names and all of them are the best of names. Call Him by any of these and it means the One and Only Allah. So, it was made clear that their apprehensions on that count were wrong.

As for the second incident, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ would recite the Qur'ān loudly during Ṣalāh, the Mushriks made fun of him and passed audacious remarks berating the Qur'ān, archangel Jibrā'il, even Allah Ta'ālā. In response to that, the last part of this very verse was revealed where he has been advised to take to a middle course between the loud and the low, as the average voice took care of the functional necessity. And as for the opportunity the Mushriks had to cause pain to them over the loud pitch of the voice, they would be relieved of that too.

The third problem was that the Jews and Christians proposed children for Allah Ta'ālā and the pagan Arabs said that idols were partners of Allah. The Sābiāns and the Māgiāns used to hold that not being particularly close to Allah amounted to a personal loss of worth and honor. In answer to these three religious groups, the last verse was revealed where their three notions have been refuted.

It will be noted that, in this world, the one from whom strength and

support is received is sometimes younger than one, like children, and sometimes an equal, like a partner, and sometimes older than one, like a supporter and helper. Here, in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has refuted all three in the same order.

### Ruling

The etiquette of recitation in Ṣalāh as given in verse 110 is that it should not be in a voice raised very high, nor should it be in a voice so lowered that those standing behind in the congregation cannot hear it. This injunction, as obvious, is particular with prayers wherein the recitation is voiced. As for the prayers of Ṣuḥr and 'Aṣr, the recitation therein is totally unvoiced as proved from uninterrupted Sunnah.

In prayers with voiced recitation, included there are the Farḍ of Maghrib, 'Ishā' and Fajr, as well as the prayer of Tahajjud - as in a Ḥadīth which says: Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ at the time of Tahajjud. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr was reciting in a lowered voice while Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ was reciting in a loud voice. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, 'why would you recite in such a lowered voice?' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said, 'the One I wanted to talk to in secret, Him I have made to hear, because Allah Ta'ālā hears every voice, even the lowest of the low.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'recite somewhat loudly.' Then he said to Sayyidnā 'Umar, 'why do you recite in such a loud voice?' Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ said, 'I recite loudly to wake up the drowsy, and satan.' He ordered him too, 'you should recite in a voice somewhat lowered.' (Tirmidhī as quoted Maḥzarī)

Problems and their solutions relating to the loud or lowered rendering of the recitation of the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh, or on occasions other than it, have been already explained in Sūrah al-A'rāf (see commentary under Verse 55, Volume III). About the last verse beginning with: قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ (say, 'alḥam-dulillāh: praise belongs to Allah'), the Ḥadīth says that this is the 'āyah' (verse) of 'izzah' (power and glory). [The reference is to the efficacy of the verse in seeking the help of Allah to overcome weaknesses and difficulties]. (Reported by Aḥmad and at-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Sayyidnā Mu'adh al-Juhaniyy as in Maḥzarī) This verse also provides an essential guidance. The drive of the meaning is that it does not matter how much one devotes to the worship of Allah, one is still obligated to take his or her deed

to be deficient as compared with His due right and confess to the likely shortfall in performing it. (Maẓharī)

And Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه has said that a child from the tribe of Banī 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, when able to say meaningful words, was taught to recite this verse by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then he recited the verse:

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلِيٌّ  
مِّنَ الدَّلِّ وَكَبْرُهُ تَكْبِيرًا - (١٧:١١١)

And say, "Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone [needed] to protect Him because of [any] weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation" - 111). (Maẓharī)

And Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه has said that once he went out with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in a manner that his hand was in Holy Prophet's hands. He passed by a person who was disheveled and worried. He asked, 'what brought you to this condition?' That person said, 'sickness and poverty have done this to me.' He said, 'I am going to tell you a few words. If you recite these, your sickness and poverty will go away. The words were:

تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ  
فِي الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلِيٌّ مِّنَ الدَّلِّ وَكَبْرُهُ تَكْبِيرًا -

I place my trust in the Ever Living who is not to die. Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone (needed) to protect Him because of (any) weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation. (17:111)

After the passage of some time, when he went that way, he found his condition good and showed his pleasure about it. That person told him, 'since the time you taught me these words, I recite them punctually.' (Abū Ya'lā and Ibn al-Sunni, as quoted by Maẓharī)

**The Tafsīr of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl ends here**

**With the help of Allah**

**After al-'Ishā', Jumāda I, 1390 Hijrah**

**Praised be Allah, from the beginning to the end.**



**A personal postscript by the author**

... While writing these lines, this humble servant of Allah has completed full seventy five years of his age on 21 Sha'bān, 1390 Hijrah. Year seventy-six opens amidst diseases of different kinds including the natural weakness that sets in at this age. Then there is the mass of things to do and problems to resolve. Who can look forward to the task of writing beyond this point for it would be hoping against hope. But, when it comes to the service of the Qur'ān things become different. When someone does something in the name of the Qur'ān, no matter how insignificant, it becomes for a servant of Allah a matter of good fortune and honour. This thought led me to begin the Tafsīr of Sūrah al-Kahf with the name of Allah. The idea was to take whatever it was possible to do during the years of life left as sufficient and good enough, because the purpose is not to finish the Qur'ān, the purpose is to consume one's years and energy into the Qur'ān. And Allah is the giver of ability and the helper of the effort made in His way.

*(Abridged from the detailed note)*

*End of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl*